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DETECTIVE STORIES

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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

IN RESERVE

by Frank Blighton

Hap Hadley

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY

IN RESERVE. By Frank Blighton 3

SERIAL STORY

RED MURRAY—KIDNAPER. PART TWO. By J. B. Warrenton 53

SHORT STORIES

TWO-BY-FOUR. By Harvey Denton 24
THE WHISTLED CLUE. By G. Frederick Montefiore 33
THE LITTLE GREEN BUDDHA. By Donald R. Barnett 39
SATAN'S SALT. By Willard Price 46
SWINDLERS' TRICKS. By Police-Captain Howard 58

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES

THIEF HOLDS UP GIRL 32
ROBBERS ESCAPE IN A TAXI 45
NOTORIOUS COUNTERFEITERS 52
CHASE AFTER A FORGER 57

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THE EDITOR.

IN RESERVE

by

FRANK BLIGHTON

CHAPTER ONE

TOUGH ALL AROUND

"THIS chicken," exclaimed Daphne Lord, as she lifted the lid of a kettle boiling on the stove and prodded something inside with a steel fork, "must have fought with the cavalry during the Civil War, and might be tottering around yet if it hadn't met up with an axe."

Her mother, surprised at the girl's irascible remark, looked up from the chair where she was peeling the potatoes. The two were in a cozy little flat in Washington, and Daphne, with her flushed face and big apron, made a very pretty picture against the side of the tidy room.

"Why, Daphne!" exclaimed Mrs. Lord. "What makes you say that?"

"Well," returned the girl, with a whimsical smile, "it wore spurs, for one thing, when I bought it. But I wasn't thinking of that. I was only thinking of Billy. Billy is a nice boy and he says: 'Chicken and dumplings are my middle name.' But this bird is so tough that you could use its breast for armor-plate."

"As bad as that?" replied her mother.

"Wait until I see that butcher," said her daughter. "If I didn't expect Billy out to dinner with us, I wouldn't mind so much. But the next time I do see that butcher I'm going to ask him to give me a chicken whose military record doesn't run any further back than serving with the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War. I sure will!"

Her sweet red lips lost their inviting curve and her dainty little mouth became mutinous. Then it flexed again back into a most delighted smile as the peal of the electric bell rang through the apartment."

"Oh, there's Billy now!" said she. "Wait, mother. I'll let him in. But I'll have to run down to the corner and get a nice steak. I'd never let him even look at this old veteran in the kettle."

She was back almost at once, and quite alone. In lieu of the expected visitor the girl carried a note which a messenger had brought. She tore it open. Then she read it aloud:

"Dreadfully sorry. Cannot come tonight. Called away by most important business. Please present my regrets to your mother.

"Sincerely, WILLIAM FYRES."

"What kind of business is Mr. Fyres in?" asked Mrs. Lord.

"I don't know. He never let on. I met him in Senator Walker's office. The senator speaks very highly of him. Billy's a veteran, too. He was all through the last war."

"I'm sorry he couldn't come," said Mrs. Lord, "for I'd like to see him, since you've said so much about him."

"Well, I know he has gone out of town," said the girl, "for the slip I signed for the messenger was dated at the railroad station. I suppose I'll get a letter or something, or else he'll ring me up at the senator's office in a few days, for he is a thorough gentleman, and wouldn't break off his call because of the chicken, for *he* didn't know how tough it was."

Daphne Lord's prediction did not come true. William Fyres neither wrote nor called her up at the office where she was employed as a stenographer to a senator. Daphne wondered, as the days went by. Once she casually mentioned his name to her employer.

"Haven't seen him since he was in last," said the senator. "He's probably out of the city."

Mr. Fyres was out of the city, and it was quite a while ere he returned. In point of fact, he was finding his journey and his work fully as "tough all around" as the chicken which he was destined never to taste.

Billy didn't write or telephone or telegraph for the sole but sufficient reason that he was in the Secret Service of the United States Government, attached to the Treasury Department, and he had a bewildering and baffling problem on his hands. Also part of "his business" was to see that no one ever suspected, much less learned, what "his business" was.

That was why he had hurriedly sent a messenger with his short note to Daphne Lord and her mother. Prior to that there had been a most interesting conference in the office of Richard Bond, then chief of the division to which Mr. Fyres was assigned.

CHAPTER TWO

BEHIND THE SCENES

WILLIAM FYRES had left his chief's office for the day when he received a telephone call at his hotel to return immediately. The Chief's tone was brusque, even peremptory. Mr. Fyres promptly "shed" his Tuxedo and donned a business suit. He called a taxicab and was soon climbing the stairs that led to his superior's department.

He found Richard Bond sitting behind his desk scanning a one-hundred-dollar gold certificate, and quite alone.

"Draw up a chair," snapped Bond. "Sorry to break into your social engagements. Glad I caught you at the hotel. Look at this!"

He tossed over the bill. Billy scrutinized it with care. Then he examined it with the large glass and passed it back, a puzzled expression on his face.

"What's the matter with it?"

"Glad you asked me. It's the cleverest counterfeit of United States currency that has ever been put out. I asked the experts from the Treasury Department the same question when they brought in a big bundle of them. I looked at them all, too. It's marvelous."

"That bill a counterfeit?" echoed his subordinate. "Why, I thought I knew them all."

"We all learn something new in this department," said the Chief laconically. "I guess they learned a little something new up at the Sub-treasury in New York, too, after they took in a bale of these and paid out good hard gold bullion for export."

"What? Did you get that bill from the Sub-treasury?" asked Billy.

"Not this one," growled Bond "I'll get to that later. Now, listen carefully. I've already sent out Grey, Lovejoy and Brown on other leads to cover the big end of this case. You're rather new, you know, and they've been here for some years, all of them. So I'm giving you another clue. By the way, how is it that the boys sometimes call you 'Feather'? Is that a nickname?"

Fyres blushed. "Yes, sir."

"H'mph," grunted the man on the other side of the desk. "Who gave you that?"

"Oh, that, Chief, was before the war. I was an engineer working on a power-plant in the Cascade Range. Thanksgiving came along and we were away out there, miles from nowhere. So we had a turkey shoot."

"A turkey shoot?"

"Yes. We put the turkey in a box, you know, with only his head sticking out and protected the box with a steel plate to keep him from getting hit except in the head. There were four of us. Each had a shot at it. Only one could win the turkey and the three losers had to pay for it. Then the four of us had it cooked and ate it."

"You won the turkey? Is that how you got that nickname?"

"It was this way: The other three had the first shots. One fellow shot off the turkey's bill on the tip. He gobbled. The next chap shot off his wattles. He gobbled worse. The third man shot off his head at the neck. That was enough to give him the turkey, but I had to have a shot, too. So I told them to take a feather and stick it endwise in the box with the quill to hold it and the tip toward me. I drove the feather through the box ahead of my bullet—and I've been 'Feather' Fyres ever since. We four were all in the same engineering corps together during the war, until I was promoted to the Intelligence Service and came from there into your department."

Richard Bond smiled grimly.

"Well, 'Feather,' this clue I've got for you is as light as a piece of thistledown. It's four weeks old. We found these marvelously correct counterfeits in the national Treasury, where they had been sent from the Sub-treasury in New York. That was three days ago.

"The only thing about these bad notes is that they always bear the same serial number that genuine notes bear, they're duplicated by a lot never issued, and the carmine of the seal is a bit off color. We've traced the genuine issues and know where they went. Most of them are still in banks. A few are in general circulation. But this counterfeit," he held it up, "is triply dangerous to the Government of the United States."

He emphasied the last words.

Feather Fyres hung on his next words with intense interest, tempered by not a little awe, for his chief was more aroused than he had ever before known him to be.

CHAPTER THREE

ON THE TRAIL

"OF course," went on Bond casually, "we immediately notified the banks and trust companies throughout the entire country by telegraph to watch for this new counterfeit. That's how I come to have the one I hold in my hand. It was sent down from Philadelphia by special delivery, and I only got it after you had left the office."

Feather nodded.

"This bill wasn't left at the Sub-treasury, although there's one in Philadelphia, as well as New York. The lads who were laying it down were too clever for that. They got a hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold bullion in the big town on their first shot. This they shipped abroad. Our agents on the other side are trying to trace it now.

"This bill, and two others like it, were laid down in Philadelphia. The same chap laid them down, as near as I can figure now. Anyway, they all came into banks there from different merchants' deposit accounts. In each case the man who laid them down bought something that cost a little less than twenty dollars.

"At one place he bought a pair of shoes that cost sixteen dollars. At another he bought an expensive imported soft hat costing eighteen dollars. At the third he bought a nice bathrobe that cost seventeen dollars. He got back good money for change in all three places."

"I see," said Feather. "Well, at that rate

he made two hundred and forty dollars clean-up for that one day in Philadelphia."

"You've got the big idea," said his chief. "Now, Feather, just suppose there's a hundred other chaps out playing the same game? None of the gang go near the banks. They've already made a big clean-up in cash. The nerve of them—going to a subtreasury!"

Billy Fyres looked sharply at the bill again.

"Pardon me, Chief," said he, quietly; "it didn't take an awful lot of nerve for that. The bill is so remarkably like the regular Government currency that even the experts are likely to be mistaken. Isn't that Government paper?"

He fingered it thoughtfully ere handing it back.

"Feather," said his Chief, "I've got to hand it to you. The other three agents didn't ask me that question. It is Government paper. Those silk threads were never blown into that paper as some counterfeiters have tried in the past. That is genuine Government paper; those plates from which that counterfeit note was printed are so expertly done that there isn't a flaw in the engraving. Now, you can see how important a case this is."

"Tremendously so, sir," said Feather Fyres, unhesitatingly. "The Secret Service hasn't enough men to be everywhere warning all the merchants. There aren't enough men in the department for that."

"No, you're right. But we've got a few in reserve," said Bond. "They're not on active service, you know. There are a few retired men scattered all around this country who have served this Government in years past both honorably and efficiently in this department. Here's a little notebook with their names and addresses in code. See that you give this book to me when you come back. You can call on any of them for local aid if you need it.

"Now, Feather, here's the names and addresses of the three merchants. That's the only clue you've got. They or their clerks have all seen this man. You've got to get a description of him—and then find him, if you can. If you can drive a feather through the side of a box to win a turkey, can you drive a clue that's as light as a feather to where the man is that engraved these plates, got this Government paper, printed and passed these dangerous bills? That's your job from this minute until you've done it—if you can do it."

"I can try, sir."

"I know you will. Now, Feather, one thing more. The man that engraved these plates has a nerve as rigid as the geometric lathe over in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. This isn't a photographic reproduction, as so many counterfeits are. *It is steel-engraved.* Remember that.

"Even if you get the man who shoved these bills, that isn't enough, although it will be a big help, perhaps. You've got to get the man who made those plates, and he is either the same man or an accomplice of the same man who procured that Government paper. Every sheet of Government paper, Feather, is watched and counted and scrutinized from the first vat in the paper mill until it rolls off the presses, right here in Washington. The men who see to that are absolutely incorruptible—absolutely—and have been in the confidence of the Government for many years."

He held out his hand. "Good-by and good luck." Billy Fyres took the trail as the door closed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FLY IN THE BERTH.

FYRES always kept a sum of money in reserve at his home for emergency service. He took a cab to his hotel, packed a bag with a few changes of linen, provided his torch with an extra battery, saw to it that he had plenty of cartridges for his revolver, and then hurried to the railway station to catch a Philadelphia train.

There he dispatched the brief note by messenger to Daphne Lord. From then on he cut himself off from all communication with any one in Washington save Richard Bond. He did not even communicate with

Senator Walker, who had recommended him for the Secret Service following the close of the war.

After he had been ensconced in a berth he studied the little memorandum book which he had been given. It contained about fifty names, and one of them, he noted with a faint smile of amusement, bore the address: "Sitka, Alaska."

He put the book back into the inside pocket of his vest, buttoning the flap. Its pressure would always remind him that, if needed, he could call for local aid.

Then he began thinking of the seriousness of the problem ahead of him. It was a very grave and arduous task indeed. Chief Bond had not said so, but Billy knew without his saying so that the man who had "laid down" those three counterfeit bills in one day at various Quaker City stores would not be in the city now. The chances were very much against that. He might be anywhere else in the United States. He might even be wearing the shoes, the hat, and, when evening came, tucked away in some snug corner, he might array himself in the fancy bathrobe. Fyres decided that the fellow, whoever he was, must have an inclination toward luxurious tastes, for the articles he had purchased were all much different than the ordinary ignorant counterfeiter—generally a foreigner—would buy.

The more he reflected on the matter the more it seemed to him that the chap would be a plausible, well-dressed individual, with plenty of nerve, for he must know that the bills were spurious. Otherwise, Billy reasoned, he would not have passed three of them in one day, at three different places of business.

"No honest man would do that," he told himself. "An honest man would nurse along those other two century-bills and draw, instead, on the change he got from his first purchase to get the hat and bathrobe. That makes it seem likely that he's a crook. If he is, he's one of the mob, or he wouldn't have bad bills and be laying them down. If I get hold of him I may learn something else of importance."

Then he thought of another thing.

The Chief's "Good-by and good luck" had carried sincere but no less peculiar inflection. It was not hard for Billy Fyres to "add it up" to what Chief Bond had said just a moment before.

"'The man that engraved these plates has a nerve as rigid as the geometric lathes over in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing,'" he repeated to himself, wordlessly. "Huh! The Chief didn't want to scare me, but he did want to warn me. Well, I guess the Chief's right. He must have a good nerve to engrave on steel, whoever he is and wherever he is.

"The Government knows where most of these birds are, too. But they don't know where the new ones are until they fall into the net. They all fall. They've got to fall, otherwise the money of this nation wouldn't be worth as much as a German mark."

The sleuth smiled. He was a student or he would never have "made" the Secret Service. Men in that department cannot be "dubs." They have to keep abreast of the progress in science and industry, for it is the new inventions or new processes that counterfeiters often seize upon to try to palm off bad money for good. Photo-engraving was one. The Secret Service had largely nullified that and any man using it was likely to be speedily run to earth.

This bill wasn't that kind. It was made by a man with nerves so splendidly under control that they could rival the precision of those great rigid geometric lathes that made good money under government supervision.

That set Billy Fyres thinking again. He could think in his berth while the train reeled off the miles, and he determined to sleep in it, as well, for this car would be shunted off at Philadelphia. He must have things thought out a bit, for with the opening of places of business the next day Billy would visit the three merchants and question them or their clerks and try to get an intelligent description of this man who had palmed off the three one-hundred-dollar notes.

Then a fly came buzzing into his berth, and Billy Fyres suddenly thought of something else.

CHAPTER FIVE

"TESTING OUT"

BILLY FYRES had turned out his tiny berth lamp. He could not see the fly, but he could hear its "buzz." That argued that the fly was roaming around his sleeping quarters at a very fair rate of speed, for the buzz was high-pitched.

A fly, in fact, can move with almost incredible swiftness. Its muscles are "geared up" to its nervous system so that it can reverse its flight through the air in a flash, dart off at an angle, and escape pursuit by a mere man with such ridiculous ease that it is sometimes a torment to a nervous person.

Billy wasn't nervous. Yet, as he lay in the berth he was thinking that if the flexor muscles of his own strong right arm were connected directly to a heavy load, and with a nerve-control equal to the fly's and also with a strength proportionate to that otherwise insignificant insect's, that he could lift a weight of a half-ton in the same space of time that the fly could change its course.

"Nerves," he told himself. "This guy I'm after had 'em. If he's as quick as he is steady, he's a bird. I wonder where he's flown to? Well, I'll know all I can learn tomorrow. Chances are I won't learn much, for he's got the jump on me by at least three weeks; but it's a cinch he's nobody's fool."

He dropped off into a dreamless sleep. The porter called him at six. Billy Fyres shaved in the Pullman, took his bag to the railroad station, received a check, ate breakfast, and by that time he could start out on his quest of the three merchants.

He was not surprised to find them all on one fashionable business street and within a few doors of each other.

He took the shoe merchant first, since the first purchase had been made there, according to the Chief's memorandum. The shoe man called a clerk. The clerk was vague. Under the questions he could only say the man was a tall, slender fellow, with a blond mustache and light hair. He didn't remember how he was dressed or the color of his eyes or other details. He did remember that he had been given the hundred-dollar bill; the questions put to the cashier showed that the clerk had taken the counterfeit, with the bill for the shoes, directly to the desk for change.

The clerk was also nervous. Billy couldn't quite decide at first whether it was the natural embarrassment of an employee whose "boss" had to make good the hundred dollars, after the bad bill reached the bank, and who might be afraid of losing his job, or whether or not the clerk might have been an accomplice of the buyer of the expensive shoes, size 11-C.

So he "tested out" the fellow then and there by turning to the proprietor and remarking, casually: "You see, sir, this counterfeit is so excellently done that it is highly dangerous. It would fool even an expert. I hope you do not blame your clerk for not detecting it, nor your cashier, for my superiors have informed me that the engraving is flawless and that it is also printed on genuine government paper."

The grateful look the clerk shot at him was quite enough. It was the gratitude of an innocent man with responsibilities in dread lest he lose his job.

The Secret Service man left that place knowing very little more than when he had entered it save that the clerk was not an accomplice. As little as this was, it was something; otherwise his task might have been either more complicated, although apparently simplified; for if the clerk had been guilty of complicity, having seen Fyres and known his errand, Fyres could not have put him "under surveillance" without a possibility of the fact being discovered.

At the hatter's he learned that the visitor wore a "seven-and-a-quarter" size hat.

"Did he take the new one with him or have it sent?"

"He told me to send the old one to the Salvation Army and he wore the new one out," said the clerk, who had served him.

For the first time in his life Feather Fyres thought ill of the organization named, for it might have "swallowed" the hat as a toad swallows a fly. However, he made a note of the place to which the old hat had been sent, determining to visit it later and

try to find it, to develop another clue, no matter how shadowy.

It was all in the game, for catching this gang of counterfeiters or any of their accomplices bade fair to require an enormous amount of ingenuity and more hard "grubbing." It is only in romances that counterfeiters are caught with some flash of mental process.

More often, tracking them down—save for a lucky clue—is like the slow but remorseless rusting away of a thick wire. "Uncle Sam," however, never falters, never abandons any clue, however slight, and if it took years, Billy knew some Secret Service man would finally capture this gang.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HYPNOTIC ROBE

BETTER luck awaited him at the haberdasher's place of business

"This is the same size and style of robe we sold him," said the proprietor. He brought forward a beautiful garment, gray in color and edged with purple. The buttonholes and pockets were similarly adorned and a gorgeous flat but strong purple ribbon-belt with a gold-plated buckle completed the ornamentation.

"Some bathrobe," said Fyres, watching the proprietor.

"Oh, no, sir; it's a house-gown. The gentleman was very particular. He tried it on."

"Do you remember what he looked like?"

"Quite well, sir. He was tall, with a blond mustache, very clear skin, and he had a very fine, sinewy figure, sir. I could not help noticing his arms and hands when he took off his coat to try on the robe."

A wild idea flashed through Feather's brain. He dismissed it. It could not be true. It was contrary to all precedent. The man buying that ornate robe simply could not be the same man who had made the plates, for that would be contrary to all tradition. The men relied on to "shove the queer" are paid a percentage, generally, of their illicit gains. The engraver who tries to beat the Secret Service men in the most desperate and stealthy game of crime known rarely or never puts himself in open jeopardy, and then only when hard pressed. Otherwise he never "lays down" a bad bill himself. That is his best "protection," and that is why he has accomplices.

Yet the very next words of the merchant seemed to confirm that utterly untenable theory, no less than refute the traditional one.

"I was very much surprised," said he, after replacing the robe in the window where it had been on display, "to get back the bill from the bank. The customer seemed a gentleman in every sense of the word."

Feather Fyres tried a shot in the dark with a nerve as smooth as when he had shot to win a turkey without a head and driven a feather, end-on, through a box.

"It is entirely possible," said he, "that he may not have known it was a bad bill. I will be frank with you. A large number of those bills have been made, according to my superior's statement to me. I didn't recognize it as a counterfeit when he first showed it to me. So, can't you see, this gentleman—whoever he is—may have been equally ignorant?"

"I am very glad to hear you say that, sir," said the merchant. "It is quite true. If he should come in again——"

"I would be candid with him," said Fyres, "and tell him exactly what I say. Tell him to communicate with the chief of the division of the Treasury Department, direct, at Washington. It may even be that he knows where he got the bill. In that case he might be able to furnish a clue, however slight, to lead back to the man who made it. Just tell him that, if he should ever come in; for it would be a pity to lose his trade if he isn't at fault."

"I will. As I said, he was a gentleman in every way. He was most particular about the fit of the garment. He's about six feet tall, and is slender but well set up. Looked like a clubby sort of a chap. Oh, I remember—it was raining; that is, it began to rain after he came in. He said he was going to the station, and he called a cab, sir."

Billy Fyres walked out. "Sure, he called a cab," he muttered. "Why wouldn't he? I wonder where he is now?"

He paused to look at the robe in the window. It held a fascination for him, despite the urgent character of his errand. It fact, it seemed to hypnotize him and he continued to stare at it dreamily, when he should have been legging it toward the Salvation Army.

Yet there are times when contemplation is better than action. Presently this proved true. Billy Fyres was still dreaming and looking at the same purple-edged robe when the door opened and the merchant beckoned him inside.

"I was just talking with my cashier," said he. "She told me something after I told her your errand. Would you care to hear it?"

Billy said he would. The cashier was a nice girl, and she reminded him somewhat of Daphne Lord and his lost dinner. Her words, however, reminded him that he was a Secret Service operative and could not stand in the street all forenoon mooning at a house robe which was a "twin" to the one his quarry had carried off.

"When the gentleman paid me," said she, "he took the hundred-dollar bill from his pocketbook while he was looking at me. He was trying to flirt with me. He was very good-looking, his hair was curly and he had nice eyes. But as he took out the bill I noticed a letter fell to the desk. He picked it up very quickly. So I only saw the postmark. It was Wyncliffe, a town on the main line about thirty miles from here. It's a fashionable suburb, and he may be one of the artists or literary people who live there."

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SELF-PROVING CLUE

"WYNCLIFFE," repeated Feather Fyres, as he trudged toward the Salvation Army headquarters, where the old hat had been sent. "I'm getting warm. Now if that old hat has a similar name in it maybe my dreaming over that robe wasn't all lost time. Otherwise I'd have been gone out of that merchant's sight or ken. Blessings on that sharp-eyed little cashier."

Ere he reached his next destination the sleuth decided that it would be quite improbable for the purchaser of the robe to have dropped the letter to lay down a false clue—provided the name "Wyncliffe" was also in the discarded hat; for the two transactions had taken place at different stores and the girl's description of how quickly the chap had retrieved the fallen letter seemed to make it evident that he had not intended the letter to be seen at all.

"Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other," said Feather, as he entered the Salvation Army's industrial department and stated that he would like to buy a second-hand hat. A captain glanced in a surprised way at the one he was wearing.

"I want it, to see if it will fit a friend—a gray fedora," continued the detective blandly. "Maybe you have something that will suit him, for, although it sounds funny to say it—he's a mighty particular sort of a chap about his attire. Until a short time ago he used to wear only the best of everything."

The captain rummaged along the shelves.

"What size hat does you friend wear?" he asked.

"Seven and one-eighth," said Feather promptly, "and I doubt if he would be satisfied with any other size. In fact, I know he wouldn't. You see, some people are very particular, even when things turn out quite differently than they could ever expect they would."

The captain brought three fedora hats. One was black, one was brown and the third was gray. He picked up the last.

"This is a good hat and hasn't been worn as much as most of those we get here," said he.

Feather held his nerves to the rigidness of a geometric lathe as he inspected it. He turned back the sweatband, even after he saw the words, "Frost, Hatter, Wyncliffe," in the crown, with a resplendent lion pawing at nothing in particular.

"I think this will just suit my friend," said he. "How much?"

The captain hesitated.

"We usually charge fifty cents," said he, "but that is for poor people." He glanced again at the visitor, who was neatly attired in a striped brown suit, smooth-shaven, cravat *au fait*. Fyres smiled at him and thrust a five-dollar bill over the counter.

"Is that enough, brother?" he asked.

The captain gazed at it. He seemed nonplussed.

"Fifty cents for the hat," added the detective, "and four dollars and fifty cents for those wonderful doughnuts the lassies of the Salvation Army used to serve when I was in the war—Engineering Corps."

"God bless you, sir," beamed the officer.

Fyres bowed himself out with an answering smile, which was as genuine as the crisp new bill he had just parted with. It was an honest bill, fresh from a geometric lathe. He had won his first really self-proving clue. Where it would lead he did not know. But he determined to follow it without delay.

He barely reached the railroad station and put the hat in his bag when the announcer was calling off the stations for a train. At the word "Wyncliffe" Billy Fyres walked out, bought a ticket and boarded the departing train. He was the last man to pass through the terminal gate, but he was the first man off at the beautiful little suburban city and hired a cab to take him to the best hotel in town.

He was entitled to a good meal. He never knew from one meal to the next when he would get another. Also, he must "frisk the town," hoping for some sight of a tall, blond young man, who "looked like a perfect gentleman," wore an 11-C patent-leather shoe, a seven and one-eighth hat, and, perhaps, a mustache. He wasn't sure about the mustache, any more than he was sure his quest would not "draw a blank."

Yet, as he drove past ornate residences, it seemed to him that a place like Wyncliffe would be just the sort of a locality a chap who would buy a luxurious house-robe like that would be likely to live in, or at least visit occasionally. If he could not stumble upon some trace of him, he could at least investigate the clue in the top of the hat, and Mr. Frost might remember to whom he had sold it.

It might be even possible that Mr. Frost had received a spurious bill, although the age of the hat, hypothetically, was against that surmise. So Feather registered at the hotel, paid for a room, locked his bag in a closet, ate his lunch and then started out through the business section of the town. He strolled leisurely and casually, smoking a cigar and looking at stores until near the hatter's.

Then he stopped short.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"POP GOES THE WEASEL!"

FEATHER FYRES pulled out his watch and compared it with a big clock in a jeweler's window near the clothing store kept by Herman Frost. He knew he had a good watch. He knew before he compared it with the big regulator in the window, over which hung the legend, "Washington Time," that his watch would not vary three seconds from the clock.

Just as there are "short cuts" in arithmetic, by which solution of a problem may take shorter time, so there are similar expedients in Secret Service work, where the element of time is often "cut very fine." A second, more or less, may mean a matter of life or death, to say nothing of the apprehension of a criminal or his escape. Vigilance and prudence are always used. Precision walks hand in hand with them.

But the detective was not thinking of these things. He was thinking of the display in the window beneath that clock. Fashionable stationery was shown in samples and the words "Steel Engraving" and "Dies Made to Order" recalled the parting admonition of Chief Bond.

He strolled on, thinking.

He must get into that store on some pretext, however, and "mug" the occupants. The coincidental elements of the postmarked letter dropped, as he was now sure, by an inadvertence, with the name of the same town in the lining of a hat which the former

owner had discarded, lent an element of increasing probability to the fact that this trail was getting "warmer."

So Fyres walked along. He didn't care to make a purchase. He just wanted to have an apparently genuine errand and to meet guile with guile—provided the "chubby" chap was in that Wyncliffe jewelry store—to spot him and at least put him under surveillance until he could get something more tangible.

Meanwhile, if the clue did not "die" he would communicate with the Chief and "nurse it along." The fact that the descriptions of the man who had "laid down" all three bills in one day tallied exactly was also strong circumstantial evidence of criminal knowledge, if the case ever came to a legal "showdown."

So Fyres returned to his hotel. In the privacy of his own room he took out his watch and carefully moved the regulation lever a bit. Then he re-set the hands, showing it was three minutes slow. He was back almost at once to the jewelry store. The name on the window was "Montagu Sorel."

He walked in and asked for the proprietor. Mr. Sorel came out from the rear of the store. Feather Fyres knew at once that he was shooting at another feather—a feather of a chance that might lead to the apprehension of a most dangerous and wily gang of brainy counterfeiters, or might not. This was a clear case of "Pop, goes the weasel." He had the suspect before his eyes.

"Would you mind, Mr. Sorel, having a look at my watch? It's usually dependable, but I notice it isn't quite in tune with your regulator. I haven't dropped it that I know of."

The tall, blond young man with the fresh complexion took the watch and smiled courteously.

"Stranger in Wyncliffe?" he observed as he opened the case.

"Yes. I'm an engineer by profession—or was, rather, before the war. Pretty little town you've got here, Mr. Sorel. Is it true, this rumor that you might be thinking of putting in a new water-works system? I only arrived just before lunch, and was strolling around. Used to be in that business."

Sorel handed back the timepiece.

"Your watch was running a wee bit slow, I think, Mr.—er—er——"

"William Fyres." The sleuth handed him a card. On it was his membership in the Engineer's Club, and the same address in New York. It was a useful card.

"I haven't heard of any such project," said the young jeweler with a slowness that seemed almost suspicious. "They might be able to tell you over at the city hall. See the commissioner of public works."

"Thank you! I wasn't sure of it. But since the war—deflation, and all that, you know—a chap has to take a chance at even a rumor. I haven't connected with the old game permanently, but I may, if I can hit on the right opportunity. So I'm scouting around a bit."

He reached for his money.

"Oh, no charge," said Sorel courteously. "Were you in the war?"

"With the engineers. I enlisted."

"I was a major when the armistice came," said Sorel, "but we didn't get across."

"You missed something," smiled Fyres. "Thank you, sir. Good-afternoon."

He walked outside. Despite his own glib way he was rather more than sure that Sorel doubted him.

It was another good sign.

CHAPTER NINE

"COLD TURKEY!"

THE detective met a policeman in front of Frost's, and asked of him the way to the city hall and the name of the commissioner of public works. The officer gave him the information. The detective, keeping true to his rôle, went to "headquarters." He found the commissioner, but the latter laughed at the suggestion.

"We get our water from the city's filtering plant and pay for it," said he. "Somebody's been kidding you."

Fyres lifted his brows in simulated surprise, but chatted about engineering topics

with the commissioner until the latter was abundantly convinced that he was "up in the game." He told that official of his work elsewhere and of the turkey-shooting episode. Then he went back to his hotel, told the proprietor of his "bad luck," gave him a cigar and went to his room to pack his bag.

While there he looked up the address of Montagu Sorel in the telephone book. "The Esplanade" looked auspicious. Its name suggested the sort of a street a man would live on who wore a nifty house-robe. Then Mr. Fyres called a cab and was driven to the railway station. He dropped off at Coburn, the next town, and left his bag in a hotel there.

Without delay he filed a code telegram to his Chief. Then he ate supper, hired another cab on the outskirts of the city and was driven sixteen miles back to Wyncliffe. He drove past "The Esplanade." It was rather far out. He paid and dismissed the cabman a half mile beyond, and then trudged back toward the place. There were several houses. He didn't know which was Sorel's, and he dared not risk frightening his over-alert quarry by inquiring at either lest he hit on the wrong house—the one where the jeweler lived.

So he stopped and chatted with a chap at a gas-station. The man told him, but added that he didn't think Mr. Sorel was at home.

"You better go downtown," said he. "His chauffeur drives down for him every evening. Sorel's a sport, and belongs to the best clubs."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a limousine flashed past, coming down the hill where the suspect resided. A swarthy-faced chap, with a peaked, foreign countenance, was in the chauffeur's seat. The driver glanced at them, waved to the gas man, but kept on.

"Gosh! There goes Joe Pulaski now," said the gas vendor. "He's Mr. Sorel's chauffeur, but he's early tonight. Guess you won't be able to get down to see him before he gets back home."

Billy tendered the man a good cigar.

"I'll just take a stroll up the road and back again," said he. "Much obliged for your kindness." He walked away. But he did not return. He kept on, crossed the fence around the house at a point where the heavy trees and underbrush made it seem safe, and reconnoitered it from a distance.

Then he went back to the road and walked along it, thinking hard. Slight as the circumstance was, Billy Fyres regretted, very much, that the chauffeur had seen him talking with the gas vendor. He could not very well caution that chap against making his presence known without arousing an acute suspicion. He simply wanted to watch Sorel and his movements while remaining incognito. Still, it was "all in the game," and if Sorel was only an innocent bystander in a very shameless and subtle scheme to defraud the Government of the United States on an enormous scale, then all this was labor lost. If he was a guilty participant, then Fyres knew that he himself was courting danger, yet must see it through, for once a trail is found there is no turning back.

That idea of personal peril didn't bother him particularly, for it was all part of his work. It was because he was fit for his work that he was engaged in it. The "yellow" in the Treasury Department is all on the genuine money it safeguards, and none of it in the make-up of the hard-working, faithful, human bloodhounds who "follow the trail."

The sky was overcast and a slow drizzle of rain began to fall. Billy hadn't a raincoat, so he paced back and forth along the highroad, toward and away from the house, looking now and then back down the long hill to see if he could catch a glimpse of Sorel's returning machine.

The road was well paved save for a rut or bump here and there. The trees grew close to its margin, and their leafy boughs afforded a sort of shelter. As he finally glimpsed the flaming headlights down the road Billy drew to one side. He was perhaps a hundred yards from the gate of the Sorel house. His heart sank when he saw the machine pull up at the gas-station, but it rose again when he saw the hose unwound. Mr. Sorel was merely refilling his tank.

But the machine didn't make the expect-

ed turn in at the gate as it neared it. Billy made another mistake. He had stepped out a bit from the shadows and the glare of the powerful headlights bore on him. In a trice the machine spurted forward. It seemed actuated by devilish malice. Billy stood like a deer facing a "jacklight" in the woods until it was too near for comfort. He started to step to one side. The machine was coming with throttle pressed clear to the floor of the car—coming like a mountain lion in bounds that ignored bumps in the road.

Feather Fyres widened his step to a leap. He calculated nicely. Merely the fender of the on-coming car, driven by the hard-faced foreigner with the Polish name, brushed him. He knew, as he feigned the fall he made, that there was a very big "turkey" somewhere around, and it would be a day of real thanksgiving for all concerned if he could "coop the bird."

Then something happened on which he had not calculated at all. His foot slipped on the gnarled wet root of a tree. He sprawled toward the trunk headlong. He struck it head on. He was "out" in reality, while only intending to appear to be. The machine paused. The Pole descended, walked over and looked at the bleeding and still form with a smile of amused satisfaction.

He walked back to the car.

"He's gone," said he quietly, "and no blow-back. Where now, boss?"

CHAPTER TEN

A LOST TRAIL

WHEN Feather Billy Fyres suddenly ceased dreaming of shooting at a turkey with blond wattles and came "back to earth," he surveyed his own ruffled plumage with a rueful expression.

He recalled what had happened. He put his hand to his aching head. It came away moist. He pulled his torch. His hand was red.

"You're a hot bird," he apostrophized himself scornfully. "You ought to quit this job, get yourself a dressing-gown with a purple belt and squat down somewhere to think how easy you fell. As a Secret Service man you ain't a bit wider open than an empty box-car on a siding."

Then he drew out his watch. It had been ten minutes after nine when he had entered the grounds. He judged that he had spent seven or eight minutes in waiting. It was now only twenty-two minutes past nine. He rose, groggily, steadied himself by a determined effort of his reserve strength, and walked to where the machine had struck him. His torch showed him that it had not turned around. Instead it had driven on.

Doggedly he followed the tracks under the trees. The road was plain, for the chill rain was turning to snowflakes and the bright new non-skid tires left a plain trail. Billy Fyres did some fast thinking. The car had struck him purposely—or rather had seemed to. That proved itself. It had not stopped to pick up its victim. Things were bad, but they might be worse. The car could go a hundred yards while he was going ten feet, but if that hard-faced Pole had really intended to hit and kill him, he might have taken the fact for granted, so realistic was Billy's flying fall from the fender.

If that was so, around the bend of the road somewhere that same car might be standing, or it might have turned off some lonely by-path in this well-wooded and hill-dotted country toward a rendezvous where the counterfeiter, alarmed, might be getting ready to "switch his plant."

Sorel was no fool. He had not rested on the story Fyres had told. Wary by instinct, unscrupulous by nature and "with a nerve like a geometric lathe," for he was an engraver as well as a jeweler, he had gone on.

Billy Fyres followed. He was alone, but he was "hopping mad." Not more so at the murderous Pole than at his own stupidity. He was intensely chagrined, but equally determined. Then, as he came around a curve in the road, he had another piece of luck. A red gleam from a standing vehicle semaphored its warning beam. Billy Fyres stalked it on feet that might

have been feathered and with the technic of a crafty Comanche warrior.

He came around it in front. As he plunged into the road he saw that it was a truck. The driver seemed alarmed.

Fyres came up to him.

"Are you going this way?" he asked, pointing in the direction of the dimming tracks.

The fellow nodded.

"Will you give me a lift? That car knocked me for a row of old elm trees. I want to catch the chauffeur."

"Why, you're hurted," gasped the truckman. "Sure, I'll give you a lift. Jump up."

Billy Fyres gained his seat. His head was giddy again, but he held on as the empty truck rumbled along the road. Now and again his companion gazed toward him solicitously.

"Are your hurted bad?" he finally inquired.

"Not so bad, buddy. You can't kill a man that's been in the war as easy as some of the profiteers that stayed at home."

"Were you in the war? So was I."

"In the engineering corps." Fyres gave his battalion, regiment and company number, with their respective commanders.

"You don't say. Well, lucky you come on me. The war did me out of a good job, and I ain't workin' reg'lar. Say, buddy, how'd you like a little drink?"

"I don't use it, but I'm sure obliged."

"Well, take off your hat, wet your handkerchief and rub that half-dried blood off your head and face," said the driver. "You sure look bad, you do."

Billy Fyres did as the driver suggested. The truck driver heard his story—the part he was told—and snorted indignantly. The trail ahead was still plain, but the flakes of snow might obliterate it at any time. Then the squall passed and they rumbled on, over bridges, up and down hills. Suddenly the trail ended at a gate. The truck driver paused.

"That dirty, low-livered mug went in there, buddy. Want any help?"

"No. Here." He thrust a ten-dollar bill into the astonished chauffeur's hand. "I'll get him. And I'll jail him. It's a felony to hit a man and not stop, isn't it?"

"It sure is. Say, I don't like to take this coin."

"It's worth a hundred to me to get hold of that hard-faced rat that hit me," said Billy Fyres. "So long, buddy. Mebbe I'll see you on a late tour some time."

He dropped from the seat and turned into the gate.

Another ornate residence was outlined against the lowering sky. Fyres followed the machine's tracks to a point near the house. It was quite dark. He whipped out his torch, shielding its rays with his bloody hat from sight and examined the tracks. The machine had stopped. Sorel had stepped out. His slender footprints —size 11-C—were marked going and returning. The trail continued on again. Billy Fyres followed it. He followed it for four hours until, at last, as the back road into which it went from the rear of the house joined the highway, it went completely blank.

But it had turned to the right and, although dozens and scores of other machines had worn the slight snow to nothing and obliterated beyond all hope the trail of the machine he was pursuing, Billy Fyres followed as doggedly as if he could see it plainly. It must have gone somewhere, and the lights of a village loomed ahead.

He rubbed his eyes. He came down the street. He was in Coburn and very near his own hotel. He roused the porter, explained he had had a fall, washed his head and went to bed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"IN RESERVE"—AND TRAPPED!

THEY wakened him next day at nine o'clock with a code telegram from Bond. Billy deciphered it.

"Hot dog! Stay with him. Consult reserve list. Summon help if needed."

He burned the message and the transcript, lighted a cigar, ordered breakfast

with plenty of coffee and again rubbed his swollen head.

"All I need is the house-robe," he sneered at himself—"unless, maybe, it's a new set of brains."

Then he opened the memorandum book. His finger ran down the names, pausing at "C." His heart leaped. Coburn had a retired Secret Service man—in reserve. It was almost too good to be true. The cryptogram also showed him, "highly intelligent, splendidly efficient, courageous, trustworthy." Just words, but how pregnant with meaning! Billy Fyres seized the telephone book. He found the man's name—John Werner. He was the owner of a newspaper and was at his desk. One little word and he was out of his office and in Billy Fyres's room ere the latter's coffee was completely swallowed.

"Describe that house again where the machine stopped," he said. "Sorry, Mr. Fyres, for your mishap. But it's all in the game. Although John Werner is publishing a paper, it can publish itself until we've picked up that clue again."

Billy described the edifice and its location.

Werner slapped his knee.

"Good! That's the country home of Milton Fox. He's a big lawyer."

"Tangled in this game?"

"No, not directly. But Sorel was probably so scared that he went there. Fox is this lawyer's last name, and his first ought to be Foxy. You said the machine drove out the back way to another road?"

"Yes. I lost the trail when it turned into this main highway passing through Coburn."

"Fox wouldn't let Sorel compromise him by staying there. But I've got an idea. If it holds we'll get Sorel. Sorel's pointing for Philadelphia. Now I happen to be a deputy sheriff as well. What do you say if we follow and grab him? I'll put him under arrest for striking you with his machine and leaving you in the road."

"Philadelphia's a big town," said Billy Fyres, "but no bigger than I am a lunkhead."

"If my idea holds," said Werner, his eyes shining as he stroked his gray mustache, "Sorel's a bigger lunkhead than you. Listen. If he has a hangout there it's a cinch he telephoned from Fox's place. Now Fox has a private wire. But I've got all the numbers of the private wires at my office. Come on. My machine is outside. I haven't had occasion to use that private wire list since the war, but I'll get that number, and then we'll see the telephone superintendent. He's a friend of mine and will keep his mouth shut. I've got my own coupé downstairs."

They were delayed but not baffled at the telephone office.

"If there was a call, outgoing or incoming, over that wire," said the superintendent, "we would have a slip of it, since it's on our exchange. But, gentlemen, those slips all went to the suburban traffic manager in the city this morning. However, I'll give you a note to him."

The traffic manager was courteous and obliging, yet it took five hours to ferret out the coveted slip. There was a call and the number called, as well as the street number and floor of an apartment house were found and turned over, for when the Government of the United States loses the trail of a criminal every one concerned is eager to have it regained.

This phone number clue was likewise a private wire.

The street was in Germantown. The two men drove past the apartment in Werner's coupé and stopped the machine a few doors farther along. They alighted. They went back to the apartment-house and the elevator man let them off at the floor they sought. Billy Fyres gestured to Werner to "cover" the back door and the fire-escape. He himself pressed the button to the front entrance. The door opened. Fyres thrust his toe inside and leaped within.

Reports of two pistols crashed almost simultaneously, and then another alone. With his own weapon ready Werner leaped to the aid of the Secret Service man now on active duty, and he leaped with the same fire and vim that every man who has ever worn his country's shield unhesitatingly makes to aid an endangered comrade.

He saw a strange sight as he came through the door. A tall blond man in a

gray house-robe stood nonchalantly. On the floor lay a pistol he had dropped. A bullet had flattened against the barrel. Another choked its muzzle.

Feather Fyres had his "turkey" in the corner, but he was a supercilious-looking "bird."

CHAPTER TWELVE

IN PRISON AND BEAUTY PARLOR

THERE ensued much tumult and hubbub. Some one phoned for the police. Deputy-sheriff John Werner sent them to drive away the street full of spectators. Sorel sat quietly with the handcuffs on until Werner told him that he was under arrest on two charges—a felony for not stopping to aid the man he had run down the night before, and another felony for trying to kill his victim when he had come in search of him with "an officer of the law" for the first offence.

Werner held a whispered conversation with Fyres. Then he took the prisoner down to the coupé, while the other Secret Service man phoned on Long Distance on the same "private wire" to Chief Bond. Bond said he would "shoot Lovejoy to Coburn" to have a complaint sworn out by that officer against Sorel for uttering the three counterfeit bills in Philadelphia, and have him arrested and taken before United States Commissioner Howe immediately he was released on the other two charges.

It proved to be a busy morning following Sorel's arrest. Wyncliffe residents raged and imagined vain things when the news was brought. They kept on raging when Sorel was taken to Philadelphia, given a hearing and thrice identified by the astonished merchants or their clerks. A committee of indignant citizens formed a rescue squad. Mr. Sorel was the victim of circumstances. They would mortgage their homes to aid him, and Montagu Fox, in the rôle of an attorney who was playing the game like his last name, was ready when the prisoner was arraigned.

Billy Fyres had a short but earnest talk with his Chief.

"I spilled the beans," said he. "I'm going to a beauty parlor."

"You've got the right bird," said Bond, "but he is sure a cold turkey. He just looked at them when I asked him where he got those bills and referred me to his counsel."

The hearing the day following was a surprise. The commissioner fixed Sorel's bail at $100,000. Citizens fairly stormed the desk to offer thrice or five times that amount.

Montagu Fox waved them back.

"My client is deeply touched by this evidence of gratitude," said he loftily "It is a tribute to his life-long rectitude in Wyncliffe. But until the last shred of suspicion against him is re-solved *he will stay in jail!*"

Even Chief Bond was nonplussed at that. Later on, at a Philadelphia hotel, he found Billy Fyres. Billy was reading the evening newspapers which portrayed with great gusto how Sorel was now in Moyamensing prison.

But he was not the same Billy Fyres that opened the door for his superior. In fact, the dapper little fellow, in a tight-fitting ready-made sport suit with a "golfy" look, had bright red hair, wavy, and a mustache to match, whereas Feather Fyres had black hair and was smooth shaven.

"Pardon me," said the Chief; "I guess the clerk made a mistake in the number of the room."

"Come in, Chief," muttered Billy. Then he closed the door. "You ain't ever been to a beauty parlor, I guess, and had your hair henna-treated and got a mustache to match, all because you don't have brains enough to hold a regular Secret Service job—because you chiefs do have the brains. I'm not stopping with this bird. I'm just beginning."

"Well, you fooled me, all right," said his superior. "Now, what?"

Feather smiled. Then he talked in a hushed voice, and the shades were all down and the windows locked to the bathroom, where he made his somewhat copious remarks.

"Stay with that bird!" grunted his superior. "Maybe you've got a good hunch, although it sounds crazy to me. I'll have

Brown cover the lawyer and Grey report to you on that chauffeur."

"Put a piece in the paper about my injuries, and how I'm in a hospital," grinned Feather. "No use letting Sorel hog all this good press stuff, is there? The reporters are sure to mob you, anyway."

"Good idea," said the Chief. "Well, so-long. Keep me posted."

"Same here. I'll call you up from the Philadelphia office every night or so. Keep me posted. We've got to get the plates and the Government paper, too, you know."

'Both," said the other man.

Then he slipped out the back way and later on, at the Philadelphia office, gave out a nice interview to the reporters. Chief Bond described how Sorel was caught by "Operative Williams"; he detailed the harrowing story of how that devoted public servant had "followed a blind trail"; of his injuries, and of how the department was still seeking to find the real men who had made the counterfeits.

Chief Bond also admitted without reserve that the bills might have been passed by any innocent man because of their splendid execution.

So, when Daphne Lord read the account in Washington about "Operative Williams" of the Treasury squad being laid up in the hospital, she didn't have the remotest idea it was the same chap who had once told her, "Chicken and dumplings is my middle name." Only Sorel knew the name of Fyres, and, of course, he thought it an assumed cognomen and that "Williams" was really hurt, and badly so. Sorel concluded that his captor's "nerve" had kept him up until that gun-play in the Germantown flat; and Sorel knew that "Williams" was the only man he had ever met with who could draw a pistol, fire and choke the barrel of a gun in his own hand, and send a second shot on top of that with such magical accuracy as to know the pistol out of his own hand without injuring him.

But Sorel didn't know that Fyres was roving around, alert, eager, straining like a hound against a tether, yet singularly patient and watchful, as well, in the days which followed.

Sorel was calm and confident. He seemed to enjoy the jail. He was alone in his roomy cell, and as the weeks dragged on he made no complaint. Only at night he sometimes hung the blanket over the steel door that was within the wooden one in Moyamensing prison, although this was against the rules, and sometimes he lighted his lamp, again also a breach of prison discipline.

Milton Fox came often. They planned his defense. It was plausible and ingenious, especially regarding the gun-fight. Sorel was sure he was being "held up" in his Germantown flat and banditry, common at that time, lent the color of truth to his tale, just as some one's uncanny skill and precision had lent semblance of genuineness to the marvelous counterfeit that had set the whole Secret Service Treasury Department force by the ears.

Weeks passed. Billy Fyres worked and kept "beautified."

Then, as the time of the grand jury's meeting grew nigh, more counterfeits suddenly appeared. Philadelphia experienced a golden shower of the same sort. And meantime Mr. Sorel, conscious of his life of rectitude in Wyncliffe, read it all in the daily papers and smiled blandly.

So did Chief Bond.

So did Attorney Milton Fox.

So did Billy Fyres. He smiled—and did other things, for he was so "beautified" that even the wily lawyer did not guess his identity as that "foxy" sleuth one day stood behind him in a bank and watched the attorney for Sorel get a lot of brand-new, genuine two-dollar bills from the paying teller. For Billy had something "in reserve," too.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT"

FEATHER BILLY FYRES, in fact, had a ladder in reserve.

Also a residence not far away from Moyamensing prison. At night, when all was quite still, he would toss the end of the ladder—made of stout manila hemp—up toward the cell next to the one that Sorel occupied.

Now the cells in Moyamensing prison were not merely grated compartments at the time of this narrative. Each was a room. No prisoner could see far out of the slender barred aperture which served to admit light and air; yet the man in the next room to Sorel somehow had his hand ready to catch the looped cord tossed up to him. Then he drew up the hempen ladder, made it fast to the barred cell window, while Billy Fyres did the same at its base.

Then Billy would ascend the ladder and stand on it outside the next cell to that of the man he had trapped, luckily, through the timely aid of a former Secret Service operative—in reserve.

With elaborate care, Billy Fyres would drop a little device on a long tube as lightly as a feather against the barred window. The window was generally open. In either event it made little difference to the watching sleuth outside.

The interior of that illicitly lighted cell, caught and imprisoned in the lens that lay on that window, was then revealed to the astute Mr. Fyres. The lens did not reflect the light—not, at least, back into the cell; but it did turn it through a system of cunningly devised tiny mirrors back down the tube which Fyres held, and, finally, although in miniature, the whole scene was spread out before the watcher's gaze.

Every move that Sorel made was seen as if viewed from a long distance by a huge telescope with that instrument focussed on some nearby object and its ends reversed. Night after night Billy Fyres watched Mr. Sorel hang his blanket; night after night he watched him until, toward dawn, he would remove the blanket, light his pipe, smoke calmly and then retire to sleep the sort of a slumber which only "a lifetime of rectitude" could spread over the eyes of a man so far removed from the sights and scenes of a beautiful little place like Wyncliffe.

The time of the grand jury's meeting was at hand, as said, and the shower of counterfeits which was also fairly drenching the bewildered Quakers was also working strongly in favor of a bomb-proof alibi for Montagu Sorel. There were more than enough of them passed to make a large and most luxurious house-robe, to say nothing of buying robes by the carload.

But the news didn't get into the paper somehow, although the bad bills invariably got into the hands of Chief Bond.

Then came a night when Billy Fyres paid up his bill in the little house and departed. He was a nice chap, although a little "horsey," and "inclined to stay out nights to play poker," as his landlord knew. But he didn't know the kind of "poker" Billy played with. Only Chief Bond knew that beside Operative Lovejoy, also a prisoner, held for some offence against the "peace and dignity of the United States," and who, during the long days, also raged and imagined vain things in his cell—just as he held that little knot of rope tightly against the window, secure for his brother operative outside during the nights.

Somehow this prisoner's lawyer, although a very hard-working young Philadelphian —where lawyers are said to attain the zenith of ability—couldn't get his prisoner even a satisfactory hearing the day before the grand jury was to meet and hear the evidence against Montagu Sorel, if any.

They were a skeptical and hard-headed lot, these grand jurors, drawn from the Eastern Jurisdiction of the United States Federal Court. They were men of intelligence, and they had read a great deal about Mr. Sorel and his blameless life in Wyncliffe.

The same morning they assembled, strangely enough, the man in the next cell to Sorel was allowed to be discharged from further custody.

"Whew!" said Operative Lovejoy to Chief Bond when they met uptown. "Chief, I ain't never going to even scratch a match on a mail-box, after that Moyamensing stretch I just finished, for that's an offence against Uncle Sam, too."

"You'll get eight weeks' vacation instead of four," smiled his superior. "Run away and play. It must have been tough, but you stood up to it like a little major."

"Won't you need me in this case?" asked Lovejoy.

"I've got all the evidence I need—in reserve," said Bond. "Hope you have a good time."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JUST BEFORE THE "LAST CURTAIN"

FEATHER BILLY FYRES, still "beautified" with henna-red hair and flaming little mustache in lieu of his coal-black locks and smooth face, bought and paid for his last "permanent wave."

"You're an artist," he said to the smirking hair-dresser, "even though you do eat up fifty dollars a treatment. This makes four, don't it? Well, how long before your work will wear off?"

"M'sieur, it will be at least two months before you need another."

"It will be longer than that before you see me again. Say, can you change a big bill? I guess I've only got a century with me."

The hair-dresser looked distressed.

"M'sieu eez a ver' good customer—I am apologizing. But do you not read in ze papers about zese bad bills? Oh, Mon Dieu, ver' wicked bills."

"Not these kind," said Billy, pulling out a handful of new money. "These are good. Take one of them to the bank. I'll wait."

"I am ver' distressed, M'sieu. De bank they are deceive, too. Zees counterfeit it is so expertly done. I hope M'sieu will not insist. Surely, you have ozzer money, smaller money."

"I've got a hundred two-dollar bills," said Mr. Fyres, "but you couldn't get together enough money in Philadelphia to buy them—for they're going to be used by a certain gentleman tomorrow morning. Now, I'm sorry, my dear hair-dresser. You'll either have to wait or you'll have to take one of the centuries and get me fifty dollars change. Either that, or I'll go out and change it myself and come back."

The suspicious hair-dresser bolted for the door.

"Po-l-e-e-ce!" he shrieked frantically. "I have ze head counterfeiter——"

Billy Fyres grasped him by the collar and drew him back.

"Cut that out," said he angrily. "I've got hardly enough time to catch a train. Say another word and I'll——"

"Help! Maria! Antoinette! Summon ze gendarme."

It was really too bad. But Billy's watch was altogether too accurate to allow him time enough for explanations. He had an important engagement out in the country. He was sorry for this poor little Frenchman as he cracked him a corking "right cross to the jaw," and watched him crumple up like a feather and fall prone. Then, shaking his head, he whimsically wafted another one-hundred-dollar bill down on the limp form. It alighted very softly.

"Fifty for the punch. And I'll have to keep that out of my expense account," muttered the detective, as he slipped out of a side door and down a pair of stairs. He took out the key and locked the street door from the outside as he left for the station. It would save time. Maria and Antoinette would have to go almost half a Philadelphia square to get around that corner.

Billy Fyres whistled blithely, turned under an arch beneath the railroad tracks, which extended here for a block, and made his way quickly to the Wyncliffe train. Billy had always been fond of the place, and despite the rough treatment he had received on his first visit to "The Esplanade," it still possessed so great a charm for him that, when he could not "haunt it" himself because of his nocturnal vigil outside Moyamensing Prison, he haunted it by proxy in the person of John Werner. Mr. Werner, in fact, was haunting a certain road when Billy pushed through the bushes, not five hundred feet from where he had been given the "lift" by the truck driver the night of his injury.

"He's just gone over the hill as usual," said Mr. Werner in the most matter-of-fact way.

"O. K., John," said Billy. "Well, I guess I'll close in on the gentleman. If you like you can circle the building, and when you see me wigwag from the woods you close in on his blind side. You never can tell what may happen and you're the kind of a pard I like to have sticking around. In reserve you're a whiz, I'll tell the world."

The signal was given and received. Then Billy Fyres, alert but composed, softly crooning a ballad which he had heard when

a boy, but not often since, started to cross an open space toward a shabby old mill. He knew that it was pregnant with terrible danger. He knew that each step might be his last if the cowardly criminal in that old mill was watching instead of, "as usual," getting ready to bring forth a supply of genuine Government paper as the basis for counterfeit money to take it to a man who would not soon print another counterfeit bill, since both the man and the plates were already in jail.

"Oft, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Fond memories——"

Bang!

Billy Fyres stopped humming.

He broke into a run.

The shot had come from the other side of the mill.

He rushed the door on his own side and tossed aside the frail barrier propped against the only orifice leading inside as if it had been the origin of his nickname.

Bang!

Kneeling against the side of the decrepit structure on the opposite one from that which Fyres entered with drawn pistol was the ignoble scion of a noble Polish name, again firing through a knot-hole.

"Cut it out!" Billy Fyres spoke loud and clear.

Jacob Pulaski, the man who had driven the Sorel car against him on the eventful night when the detective facing him had afterward first invoked the power of the Government—in reserve—turned with a malignant frown.

"Drop that gun," said Billy, breathing more freely, as he could hear the steps of the man outside. John Werner was running. He still had plenty of "sand"—in reserve. He had not replied with a pistol shot, holding his fire until he was surer.

Pulaski's pistol rattled to the wormy old floor. Discretion was the better part of valor, and Pulaski was as yellow at heart as the counterfeits that had fooled the Subtreasury men in far-off New York City.

"That's better," said Fyres. "Now, put your hands up. Then walk over here. If you try to lower them while crossing that vat I'll drop you with a bullet through your dirty murderous heart. And if you go into that vat, whether I drill you right or only hit your wishbone, you know what'll happen to you, don't you?"

The Pole shuddered. He treaded the plank across the vat with as much circumspection as his employer, Montagu Sorel, was said to have "followed the path of rectitude all his life" by the good but misled citizens of Wyncliffe. For Mr. Sorel had been "Mayor Sorel," too; yet, like all crooks, he had that identical incorrigible vanity which probably arises from a twisted brain cell, and deemed himself immune from the net set to catch an ordinary, half-illiterate criminal.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

STILL "IN RESERVE"

THE grand jury sat two days.

Rumors were plentiful.

One said that Mayor Montagu Sorel would surely go "as free as the birds."

That powerful and inquisitorial body at last filed into court. The foreman rose when asked by the judge if they had completed their inquiry into the counterfeiting case.

"We have," said the foreman. "Our report is sealed and is herewith delivered to the Court."

"Gentlemen, you may retire and take up the further business of your jurisdiction, if any," said the judge. "Mr. Clerk, you may open this report and inform me of the contents in my chambers. We will recess for fifteen minutes. I would suggest that various counsel and witnesses who have been subpenaed remain within call."

A red-haired, dapper man, wearing a suit of flashy clothes that fitted him absurdly tight and with a dainty mustache that matched his waving locks to a nicety, stepped forward and sat down in a chair next to Montagu Sorel and his counsel, Milton Fox.

"I guess they'll have to let the mayor go, won't they?" he asked.

"Are you a reporter?" asked the lawyer.

"My, but you're a smart guesser. Where's the mayor? Won't you introduce me to him?"

"What paper are you on?" asked the attorney.

"There's the owner." Billy Fyres pointed to John Werner. "He owns the Coburn *Daily Gazette.*"

Attorney Fox looked at the leonine head of John Werner and the lion-like gray mustache. He seemed suddenly pained. He was sure he had seen Mr. Werner before, but he couldn't tell exactly where.

He turned to ask the red-haired man a question, but that elusive fellow had slid half-way across the room and was chatting with Richard Bond, Chief of the Secret Service, who had taken personal charge of the now famous Sorel case.

Attorney Fox was annoyed. But he remembered that all reporters have their daily bread to earn and, in fact, they are sometimes rather useful little rodents as well. Counselor Fox had been at some small pains to point out to the Philadelphia scribes that his client, who had meekly submitted to incarceration, could not have been connected with issuing the new counterfeits; and that he had an explanation "in reserve," for use on his trial that would undoubtedly satisfy the Government that he was entirely and absolutely innocent of passing any with fraudulent intent.

"At least it should," the worthy lawyer assured the impressed reporters.

The fifteen minutes were not half expired when the judge returned to the bench and the red-haired, dapper man sat down again beside the attorney, alongside of whom sat Montagu Sorel.

"The clerk will read the indictment," said the court.

The clerk read several reams. Three mentioned shoes, hat and house-robe. Hence Montagu Sorel grew pop-eyed.

Then the clerk started in to read several reams more.

Attorney Milton Fox also grew rather more than pop-eyed as his name appeared in the first. He rose, and started to make an indignant gesture of denial. He was unable to finish it, for he generally gestured with his left hand, and that one was suddenly linked with a steel bracelet to the other. He looked at the amazing chap who had done this. His mustache matched his disgustingly red hair.

"Sit down, counselor. You're cooked, too," said Billy Fyres. He waved the bunch of two-dollar bills. Fox turned deathly pale. So did his client, although it was all good money—turned out by a geometric lathe.

The only error was that Counselor Fox had made a mistake when he had handed over that same bunch of bills the night before to be taken by Jacob Pulaski from his office. He had given them to Pulaski, or thought he had. That was where he had made his mistake. He only thought he had. In reality he had given them to Operative Brown, whose Pulaski "make-up" was beyond even the hint of a reproach the night before.

Mr. Brown, having since shed this make-up, watched the genuine Pulaski brought into court. So did Fox and Sorel. The genuine Pulaski wore gleaming handcuffs and a downcast, hang-dog look.

Then Chief Richard Bond stepped forward.

"Your Honor, may I take charge of those exhibits that were put before the grand jury, the ones I furnished to them yesterday?"

There was a commotion at the door. An excited French hair-dresser burst into the room.

"Aha!" he shrieked, fixing the "beautified" Billy Fyres with his eagle eye. "Gendarmes, seize zat man. He eez de head counterfeiter. Only yesterday morning he try to pass ze bad banknote on me to pay his bill. I am suspect. He grab my throat, he knock me——"

Brown gently garroted him. The excited Frenchman gurgled and sat down, still waving a genuine one-hundred-dollar gold certificate, the plate for which had been engravel by a geometric lathe.

"What exhibits do you mean, Chief Bond?" asked the judge.

"The two plates from which the counterfeits were made. I brought them from Sorel's cell yesterday, while he was at ex-

ercise. Your Honor may not know that his attorney took these plates to him after his arrest. Your Honor may not know that I have allowed him to bribe his jailers and print in his cell, from a crude but efficient press, considerable numbers of these counterfeits, while he was apparently closely incarcerated, to complete the chain of evidence against him.

"But this idea was not mine. It was that of one of my subordinates. We call him Feather." He indicated the red-haired operative with the tiny mustache. Billy Fyres smirked. The smirk was "all in the game," as well as his make-up.

Chief Bond got the plates. Then he explained to the frantic reporters who besieged him, after the indicted men were remanded for trial, how Attorney Fox had procured genuine two-dollar bills while "Feather" watched him in a line at a paying-teller's window to give to Pulaski, who bleached them in a certain chemical bath in the old mill. After these were dried, the genuine Government paper was then used to print the dangerous counterfeits.*

Sorel, Pulaski and Fox all pleaded guilty, and each received a sentence of eight years at Atlanta, with fines sufficiently stiff to repay the Government for all the counterfeits passed on innocent persons, which the Government quietly kept "tabs on," while allowing it to be done from the prison. The shipment of gold bullion, first made to foreign lands, was also subsequently recovered by Secret Service agents abroad, although some diplomatic complications ensued ere it was re-shipped to the same sub-treasury.

Feather and his Chief were on the fast-flying express, enroute back to the nation's capital, when Bond said:

"You never told me why you were so cock-sure that Sorel was the engraver of those plates and wanted to break into Moyamensing simply to print more bogus bills. How did you figure that?"

"It was a cinch, Chief. He's a feather-head. He was so cheap that he even took a chance a wise counterfeiter—as you well know—would never take. Didn't he 'shove his own queer' to get a flossy house-robe and nifty hat and new shoes? Do you think a smug, self-satisfied crook like that is going to give up real money to a lawyer who will milk him of a big fee? Not him.

"But that wasn't so wide open as my riding after him that first night with the truck driver that brought those chemicals to that old mill, where they bleached their new and genuine two-dollar bills before they used the same paper as a base for the hundred-dollar counterfeits. I felt like a feather after I found that same driver unloading the same truck away out there, and after good old John Werner—in reserve—had trailed Jacob Pulaski, all unknowing, to the same place."

Billy got a week off. He telephoned Daphne Lord and was invited out to supper. She didn't recognize him. Finally his voice convinced her.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed the girl. "I used to think you were good looking. What on earth have you been doing, and where have you been? What kind of business are you in, by the way?"

"I'm just a ham actor," said Billy Fyres humbly, "and I've been playing a part as light as a feather, supporting an old woman, you know. She was cast for the rôle of 'Justice'—blindfolded eyes, big sword, scales—you've seen the statue, haven't you?"

"An actor? I *hate* actors."

"I've reformed. I'm going to get me a reg'lar Government job. Say, Daphne, I can't tell you what it is until you've promised to marry me."

It was after dinner that, woman-like, she prodded him, for she was curious.

"Not until we know we'll be married," compromised the sleuth, "and before that, you know, I've got to have a little token."

Like all men—the brutes!—Billy Fyres pressed his temporary advantage. He dropped a kiss, as light as a swan's-down feather, on the unresisting lips of the girl.

Then suddenly, as she responded, Billy found that Daphne had as many—in reserve—as he. They have been married for some time and the supply is not yet exhausted.

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* Author's Note.—Each incident is an actual occurrence, as shown by Secret Service records, more than twenty-five years before this issue of MYSTERY MAGAZINE appears.

Two-By-Four

By HARVEY DENTON

CHAPTER ONE

EVIDENCE FROM THE DEAD

THE hush of midnight brooded over the dissecting-room.

In the rays from the broad cone of electric light hanging above the sheet-covered table stood a little semicircle of men whose faces were filled with eager anticipation. For tonight Doctor Calhoun, chief surgeon of the Van Nuys Institute for Medical and Surgical Research and Experimentation, was to give a lecture and demonstration of a very special nature.

A subdued murmur ran through the group as the door opened and Doctor Calhoun entered.

"I am sorry to be so late, gentlemen; but I assure you that your patience will be well rewarded.

He paused, his eyes dwelling upon the cloth-covered form.

"This is a peculiar occasion. It tears me with a conflict of emotions. To myself it is sadder than I can express, for the man whose earthly tenement lies here was my dearest friend and benefactor. But to surgery it is an opportunity such as is seldom accorded—an opportunity to gaze upon, to study and to profit from one of the most remarkable pieces of work ever performed by the human hand in the curing of human suffering.

"In death, even as in life, the uppermost thought of the late Dr. Anthony Twelves, himself a sufferer, was the welfare of others. And to this end, therefore, he crowned a long, useful career with one last supreme sacrifice. He did what most of us would shrink from in horror; he willed to me his body, so that from a study of its peculiarities, and of the unique achievements of the surgeons who worked upon it, there might be handed down through the annals of surgery knowledge that would be of use in the healing of other sufferers."

Reverently he drew back the sheet and gazed silently down into the upturned face—a face whose gentle kindliness in death bespoke its late owner's character in life.

The hand that held the glittering instrument trembled slightly as it descended, but quickly the chief surgeon mastered his emotion and, bending over the table, made the first incision.

And then a curious thing occurred.

Doctor Calhoun became rigid, as though stricken with paralysis. Without changing his statue-like position, he said, in a peculiarly dead-like monotone:

"Give me a microscope."

A dozen hands were instantly outstretched.

His eyes never once leaving the body, he laid down the knife, took the nearest of the proffered glasses, and began a minute scrutiny of the spot where he had made the incision.

After what seemed a long time to the puzzled spectators he slowly straightened up and, turning, faced them. A startling change had come over the surgeon's customarily genial face. The mouth was taut and grim, the dark-brown eyes blazed menacingly, the breathing was heavy and labored, as though he were struggling to suppress an overpowering fury.

For a moment he stared silently at his wondering colleagues, looking from one to the other, his keen gaze boring into the eyes of each man, as though weighing the

wisdom of some imminent revelation. At last, seemingly satisfied by his appraisal, he spoke. His voice was scarcely more than a whisper, but it struck upon the ears of his listeners like the ring of finely tempered steel.

"My friends, truly 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.' By putting it into the heart of Doctor Twelves to dedicate his body to science He not only did a great service to surgery, but He also delivered straight into the hands of Doctor Twelves's best friends evidence which, had this body been embalmed, would never have been discovered.

"Gentlemen, raise your right hands. Now repeat after me: On my honor as a physician, I solemnly swear to keep absolutely secret that which is about to be revealed to me here tonight until the time comes to testify in a court of law, which I promise to attend, regardless of any inconvenience to myself and without the necessity of being subpenaed, as a witness for the State against the murderer of Dr. Anthony Twelves."

An involuntary shudder shook the uplifted hands as every man took the oath.

"Look!"

Taking a pair of delicate forceps from the tray behind him, Doctor Calhoun carefully placed the points into the mouth of the incision in the body of Anthony Twelves and slowly withdrew a tiny glistening object which he held up for their inspection.

"This, gentlemen, is a poisoned dart similar to those still used by certain savage tribes, except that steel had been substituted for wood, and the heel has been filed down so that the entire dart plunged deep beneath the flesh, leaving no surface trace, the missile being so fine that the tiny hole closed instantly and no blood issued.

"To find the man who hurled this dart is from now on my sole purpose in life. Until then, my friends, all my classes are suspended."

He placed the dart carefully in his wallet and strode to the door. His hand upon the knob, he turned back for an instant only.

"Remember your oath."

CHAPTER TWO

CLOCK WINDS UP

IN the tiny library of the living-quarters, behind a strange little shop far down on the Bowery, two men stood facing each other across a book-strewn table.

One was Doctor Calhoun.

The other looked as though he had just stepped from between the covers of some old family album. Clad in high stock, loose flowing frock coat and congress gaiters, he brought flashing back across the years a picture of the days of Stephen Douglass, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. But, though the garb was ancient and the face of its wearer, beneath a crown of bushy snow-white hair, was furrowed with many a wrinkle, yet about the lean, wiry figure and in the bright blue eyes there lurked that indefinable something, that mysterious electric force, invisible, intangible, yet instantly felt when one steps within its aura, which for lack of a better name men call "the spirit of youth."

This was Charles Clock, once the most brilliant member of the metropolitan detective bureau, known to every police chief throughout the world for his swift solutions of baffling crimes. He was now proprietor of the famed "Clock Shop," which had nothing to do with timepieces, but contained what was probably the most extraordinary conglomeration of queer live animals, rare books, and antiques of historical significance ever gathered together beneath one roof.

The old man took a match from the table and touched its flame to the note of introduction he had just finished reading. It was signed by the district attorney, the police commissioner and the medical examiner, and it besought Charles Clock, in most urgent terms, not to refuse this case.

"I—er—seem to have a kind of grouchy reputation among my friends," he remarked dryly, a twinkle flikering in the depths of the keen blue eyes, as he dropped the ashes of the note into a capacious brass bowl.

"Well," admitted the surgeon, "they warned me you don't care much about crime commissions any longer."

"I don't. But this is different. When a faithless wife gets robbed by her chosen low associates, or a professional siren has her worse than useless life terminated by somebody's handy gun, or a wealthy rounder runs into the business end of a sharp knife—why, friend, I'm just as sympathetic as a chunk of ice. But you bring me a worthy case. And, besides, there's a legitimate reason for a dark horse investigator. Of course that's the sole reason they send you to me."

"You're over-modest, Mr. Clock."

"Not by a jugful. Don't ye think it. If all gall is divided into three parts, I got one of 'em—don't worry. The Department's not slippin' any medals on my chest if they can pin 'em on their own. There's only two types o' cases they pester me with—those they can't solve themselves and those where they're afraid the publicity of police handling will scare off the guilty party. There's nothing difficult about this, so it can only be the latter motive."

"Why do you say there's nothing difficult about the case, Mr. Clock?"

"How can there be? Doctor Twelves died at a dinner given by his club? And you were present? Your name was listed in the newspaper account the next morning."

"You have a very retentive memory. Yes, I was."

"Well, as a scientific man, with a mind trained to the same kind of memory as you compliment me with, it ought to be possible for you to reconstruct the events of that fatal evening."

"I have—with pretty fair accuracy, I think."

"Well?"

"I have not the faintest shadow of an idea who killed Doctor Twelves."

"Work from the other end, then; motive. You know all of those who were present, don't you?"

"Yes, very well. But unfortunately that acquaintance gives me no answer to your question. I wish it did."

The old man's face became grave. Crossing to the open window, he stood for a while gazing out into a cheery little back garden, where bright-hued geraniums and tell yellow sunflowers gleamed through the gathering summer dusk. Some neighbor's children, to all of whom the garden was ever open, waved longingly to him as they played in the limbs of a sturdy old tree. A green-and-scarlet parrot flew from its perch and lighted upon his shoulder; a young penguin, like some well-fed clubman in immaculate evening dress, waddled gravely from a dark corner and nuzzled his hand with its bill; a Scotch terrier and a tawny yellow kitten frisked about his feet. But Clock, deep in thought, was oblivious to them all.

Suddenly he wheeled about, so abruptly that the parrot hopped with ruffled dignity to the window-ledge.

"You're not going to refuse the case?" asked the surgeon anxiously.

"No, son. If it's as dark as all this, you need my aid. And when my aid is genuinely needed, especially in the murder of a man as important to the world as Doctor Twelves, I never refuse. But it seems we face a deeper problem than I had thought. Sit down, doctor. We'll have to go through this thing with a fine-tooth comb."

He stepped over to a side door, opened it and ran a padded stick melodiously down a string of chimes hanging in the hall beyond. An old Negro, with kinky white wool, appeared from below-stairs.

"Please bring some light refreshments and cigars, Mose, and then lock up the shop. Unless some one calls really needing help badly, I'm out. If it's anybody that's just hungry, feed 'em, and if they want a bed give 'em a card to the Mission."

"Yassuh, Marse Clock; yassuh."

"Goneter rain?"

"No, suh, Marse Clock," came the speedy answer, with a wide display of shining ivory. "Ain't had a rheumatic twinge all day, suh."

The ancient servitor hobbled off, returned quickly bearing a well-laden tray, and departed with a profound bow.

"When I went over to the window a few moments ago," explained Clock, "I was trying to dig up some memory connected with Doctor Twelves's death. At last I've got it. Wasn't there some mention of his having been bitten by a poisonous insect during his

explorations in Egypt, something similar to another well-known explorer's experience?"

"There was. But that's mere nonsensical newspaper rot. Besides, insects don't hurl poisoned darts."

"True. What I meant is, couldn't this dart have been driven into his body by some hidden mechanism within a tomb he was exploring, so swiftly that he felt only a quick biting pain, and so deeply that it was never seen until your incision brought it to light? Stranger things have happened within my knowledge."

"Well—perhaps. But he never mentioned such an experience to me, his closest friend, and the analyses of the medical examiner and the official toxicologist both indicate the presence of an almost instantaneous poison."

"But," persisted Clock, "I'm positive I remember reading, in the newspaper account of his death, some statement he himself made, just before he died, which lends color to the insect theory. I can't recall the exact words——"

"I can," interposed Doctor Calhoun. "He died in my arms, and the words are graven on my mind. They are, 'Insect—two bites—sore.'"

"Well?" retorted Clock. "How do you refute such testimony, out of the decedent's own mouth? Granted that he was dying, and his mind was clouded, such significant words as those, words of so peculiarly special a character, so utterly unlike customary death speeches, could not have arisen in his brain apropos of nothing. They must have some connection."

"But why must that connection necessarily be with anything other than the immediate event?"

"In that case, how do you explain the stab of the dart causing him to utter such words?"

"Because it felt like the bite of an insect."

"That seems far-fetched. Insects don't infest New York City dwellings of the class to which Doctor Twelves was accustomed. You don't get what I'm driving at, doctor. Granting that he received this missile at the dinner and not in Egypt, what prior event caused him instantly to associate its sting with that of an insect?"

Doctor Calhoun rose with an impatient jerk of the body and took several nervous strides about the room.

"Well, you're the first one to attach any importance to those delirious words. But supposing you're right, supposing a scientific man like Doctor Twelves actually believed in such drivel, and that he was bitten by this 'mysterious Egyptian insect' while exploring—how can that possibly help us?"

"I don't know yet, son," replied the old man patiently. "I'm just considerin' every possibility. Maybe 'twon't help us at all. But those words mean somethin', ye can lay to that—an' I'd like mightily to know just what."

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Clock. I've come beseeching your help, and naturally I'll do everything in my power to assist, not hinder. But for Heaven's sake, don't let us waste time. Let us get into action as quickly as possible."

"Doctor, we're pitted against no mean enemy. It behooves us to oil our guns, an' load 'em careful. The slower we go tonight the quicker we can move tomorrow. Exactly what was Doctor Twelves's line? Egyptology?"

"Oh, no; not at all. His archeological work was purely incidental, a means to an end. He was a marvelous blood specialist; not a practitioner, but a research man, devoting his entire life to the welfare of his fellow man. None of his valuable discoveries netted him a cent, for he published them instantly to the world. He had a small income, and most of that he gave away in charity. His exploration work, backed by Van Nuys Institute, was a result of his historical readings, which had led him to believe that there might be some lost medical secrets hidden away amongst the buried tombs of Egypt. Digging up forgotten cities was his idea of relaxation from his laboratory work."

"Was there any one present with whom he was not on good terms?"

"I think not. Doctor Twelves was loved by all who knew him."

"Except the one who killed him," corrector Clock dryly. "How far back does your own acquaintance with him go?"

"He adopted me when my parents were lost in a fire. That was when I was about four years old. He and my father had been classmates and chums at the University of Virginia."

"Did he ever marry?"

"No. From a picture I once accidentally saw in his bedroom, I—I think he loved my mother."

"Was he confidential with you? If he had had some bitter enemy, would he have told you, do you think?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer that question. He might have, knowing that I had his welfare at heart more than anything else in life. On the other hand, he was so supremely unselfish that perhaps he would have thought such knowledge would be a worry to me, and so kept it from me."

"Did you live together?"

"Up till my marriage, three years ago."

"Well," said Clock, "we'll drop the 'Who' problem for the present and consider the 'How.'"

From a drawer he took a large pad and pencil and placed them on the table.

"See if you can draw from memory a diagram showing the relative positions of the various diners."

The surgeon bent to his task.

For a time nothing broke the silence but the distant street sounds and the occasional sleepy chirp of a bird in the branches of the old tree in the garden. A tall grandfather clock in one corner was striking two when Doctor Calhoun passed the sheet of paper to the old detective.

"Please," he said very earnestly, "don't build any incriminating theory upon that diagram. It's fairly close, I think; but, as to some of them, I wouldn't take oath to its accuracy."

"Of course not, son. I see there were twelve diners. Which are the ones you're sure of?"

"Doctor Twelves, Doctor Work, Doctor Andrews, Doctor Purcell, myself and Doctor Wah. It's easy to remember Doctor Twelves's position, because he was the president of the club and always sat at the head. The other four I'm positive about because we all sat in a row, and I remember some one laughingly referred to it as a 'foresome,' alluding to our well-known fondness for golf. The last one I recall is Doctor Wah—he sat alone, at the end opposite Doctor Twelves."

"You feel certain he was killed at the table during dinner?"

"It seems impossible, but the indubitable evidence of an almost instantaneous poison leaves no alternative theory."

"You saw no suspicious move on the part of any one?"

"I can't recall any, try as I will."

"Describe his death."

"Doctor Minott was standing, making a little speech, and of course all eyes were on him. Suddenly we heard a sharp outcry. We all turned and saw Doctor Twelves, his face twisted in agony, clutch at his abdomen, like a man stricken with acute indigestion—something he was known to have suffered from, a fact upon which the murderer evidently counted to help hide his crime—and then fall across the table. When I got him into the next room and laid him on a couch he just spoke those strange words and died."

Clock studied the diagram.

"Where did you find the dart?"

"Just below the navel."

"That eliminates the necessity for any questions about doors, windows, or servants. Excluding trap-doors and ghosts, we have just eleven possible suspects—for of course, doctor, you are technically included."

"Certainly, I realize that."

"Still," smiled Clock, "though murderers have sometimes given information of their own crimes, as a blind, I hardly think we'll consider that line in this case. That leaves ten suspects. There exists only one possible way of stabbing beneath the navel a man seated at a table completely surrounded by other men; from some point under the table. There are two ways the murderer

could have used this weapon; he could have struck with it, dagger-like, or he could have hurled it by some mechanical means. If he struck, it must have had a handle, which was broken off."

Clock examined the two ends of the dart, which lay upon a sheet of white paper beneath the rays of an old-fashioned oil lamp.

"I see no indication of such a break. Was there any mark upon Doctor Twelves's body such as would probably have been made by the sidewise twist necessitated in snapping off part of the weapon after the blade had been imbedded?"

"None whatever. It went deep, entirely beneath the surface, leaving no trace, not even a blood mark or a visible puncture."

"Then it must have been hurled."

Clock consulted the list of guests again.

"Doctor Wah, I reckon, is Chinese?"

"Yes."

"What is his specialty?"

"Diseases of the blood."

"The same as Doctor Twelves?"

"Yes. I see the implication, Mr. Clock—some secret professional jealousy—but——"

"There are no 'buts' in this case, doctor. One of these ten men killed Doctor Twelves—keep that thought always before you. Tell me all you know about Doctor Wah."

"He is a very distinguished Chinese physician, a descendant of the ancient Llamas, who has brought to our institution strange knowledge concerning the human body, handed down through centuries of secret experimentation and jealously guarded by this peculiar sect. In giving this knowledge to us he literally took his life in his hands, for a Llama is bound to secrecy on pain of death."

"How old a man is he?"

"About seventy, I should say, though it's difficult to estimate the age of a Chinese when he gets past forty."

"Where does he live?"

"In a little house on Old Broadway."

Clock noted the address.

"Are all the members of this club Van Nuys Institute men?"

"Oh, no. Only about half."

"Where are the club's headquarters?"

"It had none. It was called the Twelves Club, organized in recognition of Doctor Twelves's many contributions to the advancement of medical knowledge. We met at the homes of the twelve members, in regular rotation."

"Give me some information about the other members. Tell me everything you can think of, eliminating no detail, however unimportant it may seem to you."

A battered corncob pipe gripped between his teeth, the old detective settled himself in a hickory chair beside the window. As Doctor Calhoun, walking ceaselessly about the room, talked rapidly, Clock wrote in shorthand upon a scratch-pad resting on one knee.

The moon waned. The night merged slowly into a rose-pearl dawn. The birds in the little garden chirped happy greetings to the rising sun. The orchestra of city life, with tenor squeaks and bass rumbles, began slowly tuning up for the day's program.

Suddenly the surgeon ceased speaking.

"That's all I can tell you."

"All right, doctor."

Clock rose and gathered together his notes as briskly as though he had just come fresh from an all-night's rest.

"Now we'll have some breakfast."

CHAPTER THREE

FORTY-EIGHT hours after Doctor Calhoun's visit to The Clock Shop, there assembled in the dining-room of Doctor Howard Jones, where the president of the Twelves Club had breathed his last, the club's eleven surviving members. Doctor Calhoun rose and spoke briefly.

"This being the last meeting of the Twelves Club, gentlemen, it is fitting that it should be held where our beloved president passed away. The meeting has been called through me, but by order of Mr. Charles Clock, a special investigator for the police department, who from now on is in charge of proceedings. Gentlemen, Mr. Clock."

The old detective rose and bowed to the assembled scientists with the quaint courtesy of bygone days. But when he spoke the voice and words were in startling contrast

to the gentleness of his demeanor, for through them snapped the crack of a lash that could descend swiftly upon any who dared resist his authority.

"Some of you know the purpose of this meeting. To the others what I am about to tell you will seem incredible—that is, to all but one. It happens, however, to be true. Kindly avoid wasting your own time and mine by comments not germane.

"At the last meeting of the Twelves Club Doctor Anthony Twelves died, apparently of heart-failure superinduced by an attack of acute indigestion. It was so written down by the attending physician, and no blame whatsoever attaches to him, for all the surface indications were of such a character, and there was no apparent reason for an autopsy, none of the surrounding circumstances being in the slightest degree suspicious."

"Had Doctor Twelves's body been either embalmed or cremated, and buried in the usual way, this meeting would not be taking place. But Doctor Twelves willed his body to his protégé, Doctor Calhoun, and in the dissectiong-room of Van Nuys Institute he discovered that Doctor Twelves was murdered."

Horror-stricken cries of incredulity echoed through the room.

Clock held up one hand.

"No interruption. I got a baby penguin an' several other critters who'll be hollerin' for their supper pretty soon, an' I gotter get home an' help Mose feed 'em. Kindly seat yourselves at the table in the same order as at your last dinner. If ye can't recollect, I've got a diagram that'll help."

The seating took some time and gave rise to much heated discussion. For men with highly trained powers of memory the members of the Twelves Club made a sorry showing.

When all were placed, and the wrangling had subsided, Clock unwrapped a package he had brought with him and disclosed to view a curious weapon. At sight of it Doctor Wah stirred slightly in his chair.

"In my profession, gentlemen," said Clock, "we sometimes have to violate ethics, on the theory of 'set a thief to catch a thief,' so so speak. I paid an early morning call at Doctor Wah's home, and took the liberty of 'borrowin' this miniature working model of a self-loading Chinese cross-bow. It shows unmistakable signs of having been very recently re-strung and the lever-bolts oiled, and she works to the queen's taste. One dart, however, did the job, so the murderer wasted a lot o' time.

"It's a perfect reproduction of an ancient weapon invented centuries ago, some historians say by the famous Chinese General Chuko Liang, between 181 and 234 A. D., others say several centuries before the Christian Era.

"As you see, the arch of the bow is set into the end of a long flat section of wood, roughly resembling the stock of a modern rifle. On the forward end is fastened a magazine containing small darts. On the rear end is a lever, connected with the magazine by a leather thong. When this lever is moved, the cross-bow is discharged several times in swift succession, the darts sinking of their own weight into the firing-string groove. Held in a fixed immovable position and firing at a stationary object, she can't miss. This is the weapon that killed Doctor Twelves.

"You can see the construction and mechanism of the ancient weapon. As used by the murderer, it was fastened immovably to the under surface of the table, gripped by powerful vises attached to bolts, the heads of which were sunken into the top of the table, and which did not interfere with the working of the bow-string or lever. Being small, and in the center of the table, it was not felt by the knees of the diners."

Clock ceased speaking, and seemed to study the positions of the men at the table.

"Looks like a small dining-table for twelve men. Do you feel kind of crowded, Doctor Calhoun?"

"Decidedly. I noticed it the moment we got seated."

"Seem crowded the night of the last dinner?"

"Not at all."

"H'm. I reckon there's a leaf missing." He looked inquiringly at Doctor Jones.

"Yes," acquiesced the host, "there is."

"Where is it?"

"I don't know. It was stolen the night following our last meeting."

"Well. I wonder who'd want that particular table-leaf bad as all that?" He turned to Doctor Wah. "When did you miss this weapon from the wall of your study, doctor?"

"Why, I really did not know it was gone until you produced it a moment ago. It was—pardon me—stolen once before, but that time it was returned the following night."

"Ah! When was that?"

"The night before our last dinner it was taken, and returned the night after the dinner."

"Evidently, then, the table-leaf bears incriminating marks, namely, the holes where the cross-bow was fastened underneath. Some man in this room knows where that table-leaf is. Does he care to tell?"

Dead silence greeted Clock's query.

"All right," said the old detective grimly. "Here's my next exhibit."

He produced from a pocket of his voluminous coat a well-worn black diary.

"You remember that just before Doctor Twelves breathed his last he said something that sounded like 'Insect—two bites—sore.' But that isn't what he was trying to say. He was trying to tell the location of this book, in which are the records of certain experiments with a cure for rheumatism that he had been making in his private laboratory. His intended words are: 'In section Two by Four.' And in just such a compartment of his desk I found this book. Valuable as these records are, in a way that he little dreamed they would be when he made them, yet they are not the contents that interest me most.

"A certain member of this club, not a Van Nuys Institute man, has been secretly working for a long time upon a rheumatism cure of his own which, in contrast with Doctor Twelves's custom of giving his discoveries freely to the world, he intended patenting and selling for his own profit. Learning that Doctor Twelves was working along the same lines, and knowing his genius, he feared for the safety of his own remedy. When he failed in his foolish attempt to buy off Doctor Twelves, he decided to kill him. For this man is inordinately fond of wealth and all that wealth can buy.

"To avoid suspicion, he reversed the usual method of murderers, and struck in the presence of a roomful of witnesses, his crime well masked under the well-known symptoms of acute indigestion.

"It was a clever idea. But it fails because of this little book. For herein Doctor Twelves records the visit from this man, the veiled threats with which he tried to purchase Doctor Twelves's honor and—his name."

Without warning the lights went out.

Instantly, as though perfectly prepared for such an event, the old detective's flashlight cut through the blackness and, making one swift circle of the room, came to rest upon a figure with its hand on the hall-door knob. Clock's old-fashioned Colt, its long blue-steel barrel gleaming wickedly in the rays of the hand-torch, barked once. A blotch of crimson spurted over the hand upon the knob. With a moan the figure at the door dropped back a step.

"Don't move or I'll fire to kill."

Doctor Calhoun, who had felt his way to the switch-button, snapped on the lights.

By the door stood Doctor Howard Jones, one hand clutched about his bleeding wrist.

"Will you produce the missing table-leaf, doctor?" asked Clock quietly.

When the bedlam of praise and congratulations of Clock had subsided somewhat, Doctor Work, who was rifling over the leaves of the murdered man's diary with a puzzled expression, looked up and said:

"No pages seem to have been removed, and yet, Mr. Clock, I can't find that record you mentioned of Doctor Jones's visit to Doctor Twelves, or in fact any reference to Doctor Jones at all."

The old detective rubbed his chin and grinned faintly.

"I'm afraid I'll have a powerful lot o' sins to answer for when I pass on, doctor. In addition to bein' a burglar, I'm sometimes an awful liar. First I suspected Doctor Wah. I visited his house nocturnally and found the weapon, with some darts still remaining in the magazine. But then it dawned upon me that the only one with

ample opportunity to fasten it into place beneath the table would be the owner of the house where the murder occurred. At any rate, he'd have to be at least an accomplice. Added to this thought was a chance remark of Doctor Calhoun's that it was not Doctor Jones's turn to have the club meet at his house, but that he had requested the exception as a favor, since he was sailing soon for an extended tour of Europe and might not have another chance to meet them all under his own roof.

"So I paid a little night call there. The table bore no signs of what I was looking for. The minute you all took your places tonight I saw the reason—a leaf was gone. But on my first visit that wasn't obvious. So I proceeded to snoop around, and finally, in Doctor Jones's private laboratory, I found his own records of a long series of experiments with a new rhumatism remedy. This was highly suspicious, but not conclusive evidence in the courtroom sense. With slick lawyers floatin' round, there's a whole heap o' difference 'tween knowin' a thing an' proving it to a judge an' jury.

"Hence, I did a little fibbin'. I—er—just guessed that visit of Doctor Jones to Doctor Twelves. I hope the Lord'll forgive the means, considerin' the end," he said, fingering Doctor Jones's signed confession.

"Well, gentlemen, I'm mighty pleased to have met you, but it's gettin' late, an' that baby penguin an' my other critters'll be hollerin' for their supper, which I can't trust that old fool Mose to mix just right, so I'll bid you all good-night."

THIEF HOLDS UP GIRL

THE police got the story of one of the boldest of recent daylight payroll robberies from Gertrude Fink, 18-year-old girl cashier, after she had returned to the Chrystie Press at 193 Chrystie street recently minus $1,500 with which she had set out from a bank a few minutes before. She had struggled with a pale, undersized youth who snatched the money from her, she had screamed for help as she dashed through the sidewalk crowd after the thief and she had pursued him into the basement of a tenement, only to lose him there, yet no policeman came to her aid, she said. She waited several minutes for one to appear before she went to her office and told her employers of her loss. Then they telephoned to the Clinton street police station and detectives were sent for to look for the hold-up man.

Miss Fink left the State Bank at Norfolk and Grand streets at 11:45 in the morning with $1,500 for the thirty employees done up in a stout envelope. She was walking through Rivington street on her way back, and had reached Chrystie street, almost within a stone's throw of her goal, when, she said, the youth sprang at her from a doorway. She clutched her envelope more tightly and fought with him. The battle seemed to her to last several minutes.

When she felt herself getting the worst of it she began to scream for the police. No one came to her aid. The young man, instead of being frightened by the outcry, fought all the harder until he suddenly wrenched the envelope away and went racing east in Rivington street, the shouting girl close behind. He darted into a tenement, the girl still after him. But in the murk of the cellar he found some avenue through a labyrinth of passages that enabled him to elude her.

Then, said Miss Fink, she came out, looked around for a policeman, saw none, and went back to the shop to tell of her loss.

The Whistled Clue

G. FREDERICK MONTEFIORE

"AS you seem so anxious about the safety of my diamonds, then, Humphrey, I'll put them in a secret drawer known only to myself—and you."

"I don't know of any secret drawer."

"But you will when I show you. Wait. Hush!" With mock seriousness Hargreaves went to an antique cabinet of oriental design and workmanship, walking on tiptoe, a precaution altogether unnecessary since Humphrey and himself were alone in the room. But the owner of the jewels seemed to think his friend's anxiety for their safe keeping quite too fussy and, smiling to himself, he assumed an exaggerated air of anxiety and mystery.

"D'you think this will do, Humph?" he asked. As he spoke he pressed a push-button at the side of the cabinet and immediately a drawer, about two inches square, shot out from what had appeared to be merely a thick partition between two of the non-secret drawers.

With a dramatic flourish Hargreaves dropped the magnificent string of diamonds into the tiny drawer and pressed it back till it clicked into its inconspicuous recess.

"Hidden!" he exclaimed with a theatrical gesture and a twinkle in his eye as he turned to Humphrey.

The latter had been standing with his back to the door watching the concealment of the gems in the cabinet. As Hargreaves turned he looked, therefore, straight into his eyes and caught the twinkle; but in an instant mirth gave place to a stern look of alarm and his gaze became riveted on the doorway of the room in which they stood.

Humphrey turned quickly, and his senses, whether of sight or hearing, or some less clearly defined sense, almost persuaded him that some third person stole softly away from the partially open door.

"Has some one been listening?" he queried sharply.

"Don't know for sure, Humph. Thought I heard some one. May have been mistaken."

"Hargreaves, old man, we were a pair of fools to leave the door ajar while secreting those stones. They're worth seventy thousand dollars. Take them out, and put them in your safe. They're in jeopardy in that cabinet. If any one spied on us, you know——"

"I know, Humphrey, you suspicious, serious old ass," broke in the other with the smile returned to his eyes, broadened now into a laugh, "that there is positively no one in this house at present except my very worthy and honest guests and a few servants who have been with me a lifetime, and whom I would trust, well, almost sooner than I'd trust myself." He laughed outright at the other's grave face.

"That's all very well, but the thirty or so guests in the house right now are not necessarily absolute paragons. But you always are foolhardy and fling money around."

"I've flung it around, yes, but I've never lost one single copper cent, either by burglary, swindle or any other means, and I'll wager I never will. But we must get back to our guests. I just snatched a moment away from them to show you the stones, old man, because I knew you'd be interested. I purchased them in New York today and brought them out here to show you. Tomorrow I'll take them to my bank for safe keeping. But"—and he set his jaw in a kind of daredevil way he had—"the diamonds remain in the secret drawer over to-

night, and I'll challenge any burglar to get 'em away from me. Come, Humph, the guests."

Doubtfully Humphrey followed his host back to the gorgeously lighted salon where the thirty or more guests were gliding and swaying to the airs of a miniature orchestra, and soon thrust the diamonds to the backs of their minds in the social whirl.

Not many minutes later the door of the room containing the antique cabinet was softly opened and a figure stealthily entered. A handkerchief concealed the lower portion of the face, though the last thing the intruder expected was detection. A hand went toward the electric-light button, then was withdrawn. Moonlight streamed through the unshuttered windows. The sudden turning on of artificial light might attract attention from without so none was shown.

The figure walked with assurance to the antique cabinet and, with no guidance but the feeble illumination of the moon, placed a finger unerringly upon the secret press-button, and the prowler had the gratification of seeing the miniature drawer open. With a quick movement the seventy-thousand-dollar string of diamonds was transferred to a pocket on the person of the muffled figure.

Almost synchronously a splash of white appeared against one of the windows outside. The thief drew back into the shadows. One thing had been overlooked. A veranda ran along outside the windows of the room, and some one was standing out there now peering in and possibly witnessing the crime.

Crouching low, the thief stepped toward and through the door, and was proceeding cautiously down the sparsely lighted corridor, when evidence of another oversight became apparent. The veranda also ran past the windows of the room adjacent to that containing the cabinet, and the person who had peered at the thief had evidently walked to the next room and entered through a window, and was now following the purloiner of the diamonds down the corridor.

The situation for the muffled figure might be described as hypercritical, and elation gave way to fear. Who the shadower was it was not possible to determine without turning and confronting him, a most unwise thing to do; and it was evident the man acting as sleuth was afraid the thief was armed, and kept a very respectable distance in the rear.

The end of the corridor was almost reached, and it terminated in a broad staircase which led precipitately into the brilliantly lighted salon. What could the hunted one do? Face the multitude—a masked robber, with "the goods" right there in a coat pocket? Side track into one of the many rooms which led off right and left from the corridor? Ignorance of the architecture of the house prohibited this. The sleuth in the rear would certainly overtake, or sound an alarm, before unfamiliar doors and windows could be negotiated. Ignominious retreat was effectively cut off by the silent follower.

At the head of the stairs the figure paused, uncertain. Below were visible the gaily-clad, chattering guests. The music was about to commence. Partner sought partner for the coming fox-trot. He who had followed crept noiselessly, slowly, very slowly nearer.

Risk an encounter and hope for safety in flight? That seemed the best. The trapped creature burned in a fever of fear and doubt. Hands gripped in an effort to remain steady, shoulders braced somewhat, and even a few bars of music were whistled, as people often will whistle or hum when under great strain.

That straggling whistle and the clutched hands gave courage.

Whipping off the masking handkerchief, the hunted figure dashed down the stairs and was lost to view among the thirty-odd guests.

The fox-trot had danced itself out when Mrs. Stilwell-Henderson swept up to the host and implored:

"Please, Mr. Hargreaves, let me see your latest acquisition in diamonds. I heard you've made another purchase. I would just love to see them before the next dance."

"So you shall, Mrs. Stilwell-Henderson," smiled Hargreaves, and as he ran upstairs to the room with the secret cabinet he thought: "Perhaps old Humph was right,

and I shouldn't have mentioned the stones to that empty-headed little Marie Brierby. I guess every one in the house knows by now that I have seventy thousand dollars' worth of crystallized carbon on the premises."

Breathing a little heavily from his run up the stairs and the rapid walk down the corridor, his breath stopped altogether for some seconds when he snapped on the lights and perceived the antique cabinet with its secret drawer still standing open and the diamonds gone.

The alarm was given.

Naturally no one thought of attempting to leave the house, and many voices demanded pleasantly but firmly that their owners be searched.

"This is very unfortunate," said Hargreaves. "Of course no one in the house had anything to do with it. It must have been an outside job. Yet," he added with an uneasy frown, "it's hard to see how any outsider could have got a line on that secret drawer. Why, I've never used it to hide jewelry before tonight; so no prowling burglars, who usually get the lay of a job before actually tackling it, could have got wise to it."

"I'm afraid," muttered Humphrey at his elbow, "you'll have to admit that it was one of your guests, after all—that is, if you feel certain the servants are innocent, and they've been with you for years. We were not at fault when we thought some one spied on us while you hid the gems. You should have taken my advice and moved them to another hiding-place then and there."

"Oh, forget that, Humph. It's done now. But, by thunder, I'll get those sparklers back again! I've telephoned Chief Donovan. Luckily he was at Headquarters and he's coming right up here. He's the boy to fix things for the thief."

The police chief finally arrived with his customary alacrity. He requested, in words that left no chance of a refusal, that all the guests remain and submit to a search.

This laborious operation being completed, however, no trace of the jewels was forthcoming. Fortunately for the domestic portion of the household, every one of the servants was able to account for his or her whereabouts at the time that Hargreaves and Humphrey were secreting the stones in the cabinet. The mysterious eavesdropper must, therefore, have been one of the guests —whether man or woman it was not possible to say. It seemed perfectly obvious that the thief was some one who knew the gems were concealed in the cabinet.

Having every one who could possibly have committed the crime in the salon before him, Chief Donovan naturally concerned himself about fingerprints. Leaving his man O'Gorman in charge below, he stepped upstairs and carefully examined the cabinet for any signs of the telltale whorls and arches. To his surprise he found there was not a single print on the cabinet.

"Wiped clean," he muttered. "That doesn't look like the work of one of those guests, who would probably be an amateur. Still, fingerprinting is common knowledge now. I guess every tyro crook is wised upon the subject."

When he returned to the salon he found some sensation afoot. His man O'Gorman was handling with some roughness an odd-looking figure, strangely out of place in the silk-and-jewel arrayed assemblage.

"Who's this man?" asked the Chief tersely as he strode to the side of the flustered, perspiring, white-clad man with the dark eyes and the crisp-black hair.

"Seems he's Mr. Hargreaves's Italian chef," explained O'Gorman. "He came running in here to me and said he had some kind of a story to tell about the missing jewelry. Sounds suspicious to me, but make him spill it all over again."

"What's your name?" demanded the Chief brusquely.

"Antonio Campanino," returned the roseate chef.

"What's this story you've got? Out with it."

"The kitchen he is hot," began the Italian seemingly irrelevantly, "and as all the food had been prepare, I wanna to come up for fresh air. I go up on-a veranda, on dark side of the house, for breath-a the air. Moon was bright, and I see into one room with big cabinet near window. And as I watch a man come in room. He go

over to cabinet and press a da spring—like that. Drawer open, and man take out stones that flash.

"Then I move, and man he see my white coat, and he go through door. He not even shut lettle drawer in cabinet—he jus' go. And I run along veranda, and climb in window of next room and out into corridor. I follow thief down corridor and at the end he stop. And I stop. I not know if he have-a da gun. And I not know what to do, boss.

"Then he draw himself up, so—risoluto. Then he whistle some seconds. Then he run downstairs among guests, and I don't see him no more, boss."

"Did you see his face?"

"It was dark, boss, and he had-a da handherchief roun' da face."

"If I told you the man was in this room now, could you pick him out?"

"No." The Italian was very sure on this point.

"Try," urged the Chief. "Look around."

The chef did as he was told quite hopelessly. "No use, boss. I canna know-a da man, I no see-a da face."

"All right," Donovan grunted. "But say, Tony, you said this bird didn't close the secret drawer after he'd lifted the sparklers. Now think carefully before you answer. Did you see him wipe off the cabinet before he quit the room? We're thinking of fingerprints, Tony. Did you see the thief wipe off the cabinet?"

"No, boss, no. He didn't do no wipin'," said the Italian without hesitation.

"I should mention, Mr. Donovan," broke in Hargreaves, "that after secreting the stones I myself wiped the cabinet well with my handkerchief. Mr. Humphrey here seemed nervous about burglars so I cleaned the cabinet thoroughly to, so to speak, lay a trap for them if they should put in an appearance."

"Thank you, Mr. Hargreaves." Then, turning again to the chef: "Are you absolutely certain this thief—this masked figure—did not wipe off the cabinet?" His tone was ugly, but the Italian persisted

"No. I watch carefully and I remember. He only touched the side of the cabinet with one finger. The leetle drawer came out aut—aut—aut——"

"Automatically," supplied Hargreaves.

"You saw him touch the push-button, which is on the left side of the cabinet, and you are sure he did not wipe that push-button off," continued the Chief. "Did the man wear gloves?"

"No, boss; I see clearly he wear no gloves."

"Then that just about settles your hash, Mister Antonio Campanino; you're a d—d liar."

"How so?" exclaimed Hargreaves, and a dozen others evinced angry surprise. The chef was a general favorite among the guests.

"The thing's clear as day," said Donovan. "This Italian, having the run of the house more or less, happened to be in the corridor for a little 'fresh air,' and saw Mr. Hargreaves put the diamonds into the cabinet. While you were all dancing away in here he crept up from the kitchen, pushed the spring, lifted the diamonds, wiped off his fingerprints, then told those lies you've just heard to save his skin. It's obvious."

"I don't believe Tony's guilty," came from almost every one present, followed by a grateful look from the dark eyes of the Italian.

"Well, anyway, O'Gorman," said Donovan, "keep an eye on him while I——"

Donovan's words were interrupted by the approach of one of the young lady guests. She was a girl born with the instincts of a detective, as was well known to all her intimates.

"Excuse me, Chief," said this pretty person, "may I put just one question to Antonio Campanino?"

All eyes were turned upon the questioner, but Hargreaves ran forward eagerly and, seizing both his guest's hands warmly, exclaimed:

"Why, Dorothy Kay. Why didn't we think of you before? Humphrey, old son," he continued, turning to his friend, "this is the girl to solve our little problem and restore the jewels. This twenty-year-old girl looks and dresses like a small-town flapper, but she has got a keener intelligence than some grown men on the detec-

tive force. She solved the Hunston murder mystery over the heads of the police, and has a system of what she calls 'constructive guessing,' which has brought her almost incredible success. Anything you wish, Miss May"—he turned to the girl, who smiled at him with eyes like twin worlds of blackness—"is at your disposal."

"Well, I'm not so sure," began Donovan with a grunt.

"Please, Chief," soothed the girl in delicious tones that would have softened the Rock of Gibraltar, "please let me put just one question to Tony the Chef. You know I didn't interfere with you in the Hunston case. I just worked beside you—but a little ahead," she added naively, which drew forth another grunt from the Chief.

"All right. Go ahead," he agreed moodily.

"But *in camera,* please," she said, smiling irresistibly.

Somewhat to O'Gorman's disgust the girl was allowed to draw the delighted Italian aside and to whisper a question into his ear.

The result was humorous in the extreme, and brought forth a laugh from the entire company. The rotund and still perspiring chef pursed up his lips in a most ludicrous pucker and gave vent to some strange sounds of music, a cross between a whistle and a groan, but, nevertheless, in a way that showed that, like the majority of his race, he was a true musician at heart, and had a keen ear for tune.

"That is all, thank you, Tony," said the girl as the "music" and laughter subsided. "And now, Mr. Hargreaves, will you let me see a list of all the people present at this gathering?"

"It's right here, Dorothy. I had it prepared for Mr. Donovan."

He handed her a list of names as Donovan cut in:

"You're not going to tell me you think you've discovered the thief already?"

"I'm not going to tell you anything," retorted the girl. "But in a few seconds I'm going to pick the name of the thief right out of this list, and then I shall accuse him to his face."

"Are you sure he is in this room, Dorothy?" asked Humphrey incredulously.

"Right in this room."

"B-but," spluttered the Chief, "there's no clue—if this Italian didn't do it. There was no fingerprint."

"Exactly," said Dorothy, with her catching smile and looking more like a small-town flapper than ever, with her thick cluster of black bobbed curls and skimpy little abbreviated white silk party dress against the bulky Chief's official blue. "The mere fact that there is no fingerprint on the push-button establishes a clue which points directly at the thief."

Donovan scratched his head.

"This beats me," he said. "Unless, child, you're just plain kiddin'." The push-button was pressed in order to open the secret drawer. You'll grant that?"

"Yes."

"And the push-button was not wiped off."

"No."

"According to Tony's story it was pressed by a man's finger, and an ungloved one at that."

"Yes. And the push-button being on the left side of the cabinet he used one of the fingers of his left hand."

"Then what in thunder became of the fingerprint?" The Chief was really aroused now. "And how did that question you asked Tony and his fool whistling tell you who stole the sparklers?"

"Just a moment, sir, while I read down this list of names." She spoke right into the teeth of the irate man in a tone as if she were asking that she might check off a list of colored crochet cotton, and the effect was magical.

The silence which ensued could almost be felt. Hargreaves and the somewhat worn-out guests, the puzzled but pleased cook in his crumpled, white garb, and the scowling, incredulous Chief and his no less skeptic assistant all glared open mouthed at the almost childish figure of the girl. Her wondrous black eyes scanned the list of names with an assurance and ease amounting to nonchalance.

Some one in that gay crowd felt a horrible clawing at his nerve centers. He doubted the possibility of discovery. Perhaps, he thought, this atmosphere of tension had been artificially raised with the dia-

bolical purpose of forcing him to come forward and confess. If that were so, they might wait in vain. If this girl, in whom many present seemed to have such faith, had an idea who the thief was, but was merely using this method to draw a confession, he was wise to it; he would keep the diamonds, he would——

"That's the man who stole your gems, Mr. Hargreaves—Baris Seltsky, the violinist of the hired orchestra."

A scream, such as only a strong man could utter—and he, perhaps, but once in a lifetime—followed her words.

Boris Seltsky charged through the crowd, knocking people right and left, and even taking the policemen unawares, since they had both doubted the success of the girl's deduction.

But the violinist was not experienced, and only a few seconds had elapsed before he stood crushed and wiping his eyes with trembling, manacled hands.

"And now, Chief Kay," said Donovan, giving her the title in a voice like a bass-drum, and a six-inch smile on his broad, Irish face, "just spill it to us how you put over this piece of deduction."

"The thing which enabled me to unravel the mystery and put my hand right on the criminal," said the girl, "was the fact that the thief left no fingerprint on the press-button of the secret drawer.

"Now I am well aware, Mr. Donovan, that you know just about ten thousand times more about the detection of crime than I do. But, as the famous saying runs, 'It isn't what you know, but how well you know how to use what you know, that really counts.'

"I once lived with a girl who was a student of the violin, and certain things I learned from that acquaintance I have never forgotten. She was a nice enough girl, and clean and tidy, and it first struck me as odd that the fingernails of her left hand were so very badly manicured for such an otherwise attractive and well-dressed girl. The nails were pared down to well below the flesh, and by constant pressing and sliding of the tips of the fingers on the hard, metal-covered strings and ebony fingerboard of the instrument, the flesh had become hard and horny, with formations like corns, all trace of whorls and arches being absent.

"Any violinist, using the extreme tip of his finger, as he would have to in pressing the push-button of Mr. Hargreaves's cabinet, would leave no fingerprint—provided he used one of the fingers of his left hand, which in this case he would naturally do, as the push-button is on the left side of the cabinet.

"I believed Tony's story. And as soon as you told me no fingerprint had been found and the thief had not wiped off the push-button and wore no gloves, I merely asked myself what kind of fingers would leave no prints. Answer: A violinist's.

"Suspecting this, I asked Tony just one question. He had said that the thief had stood for some seconds at the head of the stairs whistling. A highly strung man, such as a musician, probably would whistle while his mind was under a great strain, or when overexcited. By the way, as every one present has been searched and the diamonds have not been found, maybe you'd better look into the interior of Boris Seltsky's violin. I can just imagine him running down the stairs in time to take his place as leader of the orchestra for the next dance and, as he raised his bow, dropping the string of diamonds through one of the F holes of his instrument."

Search was made as the girl directed, the Chief seizing the valuable Cremona violin and rattling it with small regard for artistic feeling, till the gems fell through the sound holes into his hand.

"Then that ends it," said Dorothy Kay.

"Ends it, be——. Excuse me, miss," said Donovan. "But why in thunder d'you keep me here just burstin' to know what that question was you put to Tony?"

"Oh, that?" smiled Dorothy. "The question I asked Tony was, 'Did you recognize the tune the thief whistled?' His answer, coupled with my deductions from the lack of a fingerprint, convinced me that the only stringed-instrument player in the dance orchestra hired for the guests had stolen the diamonds, for the quick-eared, musical Tony assured me that the air whistled by the thief was the opening bars of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto."

The Little Green Buddha

By DONALD R. BARNETT

THE little jade-green Buddha on old Roland Hilliard's dilapidated bureau looked around on the other ornaments of the room with a sardonic, condescending smile. Clutched close to his stony heart lay a huge, glittering diamond necklace whose disappearance had caused large headlines in all of the morning papers nearly a year ago.

Of course each story had mentioned the fact that the owner of the gems had been murdered to gain their possession. But the interest of the press and the public both seemed to center less on the sudden demise of the woman than on the disappearance of this masterpiece of nature and the gem cutter's art.

Detectives gained a clue and followed a suspected man.

The chase had taken on an international aspect. The trail led to London, to Paris, to Berlin, then back to New York again. The suspect vanished like a will-o'-the-wisp, and the best detectives in the country admitted themselves baffled.

Old Hilliard turned the key in his faded yellow door and softly stepped inside. As softly he closed it again and shot the bolt back into its place. All his life he had been cautious, keeping one eye to the wind and the weather like the sly old fox that he was.

During the past year caution had grown to be the most potent factor of his life. At night, sitting alone in his attic city room, the door double-locked and the blinds drawn over the fastened windows, he shuddered at the sound of a step on the stairs or the gentle tug of the wind at the loose shingles just above his head. He feared the detectives he had so cleverly eluded since the time he had robbed the murdered woman.

Hilliard always had had the reputation among his townspeople at Browning of being a shady character; not dangerous, but tricky and crooked in his dealings with every one. Usually he managed to keep just inside of the outer boundaries of the law. He beat a younger brother out of his share of the old family farm; sold a horse to a poor widow, but forgot to mention that the horse was nearly stone blind; and once he had negotiations almost completed to sell the pastor a block of worthless stock when some one got wind of it and gave the scheme away.

Since then he had fled to the city.

Tonight he was an outcast from his home, a stranger in a strange place, for the roar and bustle of the city were almost as different from his former surroundings as they would have been if fate had suddenly cast him onto another planet.

Old Hilliard stroked his ample nose thoughtfully, as one might fondle and caress a kitten, and regarded the green Buddha with malevolence.

"You're a devil," he muttered thickly. "A devil, I tell you. I ought to throw you out. I ought to smash your grinning face." He made a step toward the image. An invisible hand seemed to press him back. He loosened his collar, which was on the point of choking him. The idol kept up its imperturbable stare.

"You hypnotized me," Hilliard growled, shaking his fist at the little green god. "Why did I ever bring you here? The foul fiend himself must have whispered to me." He shuddered. Then a thin grin spread over his lips. "Perhaps I'm wrong. You may be my mascot. That's it, my mascot. As long as I keep you I am safe. What a pity my hobby is idols!"

The same day the chief of the Star De-

tective Bureau sent for George Brown, a young operative not long since from the "bush league," as he jestingly called his home town of Browning—the same town Hilliard came from.

"Hello, George!" the Chief exclaimed. "I have a job for you. Day after tomorrow is the anniversary of the Carroll murder and the disappearance of the famous Carroll diamonds. Go up to the Carroll house and get some facts. They tell me that the butler who was present at the time of the murder still works there. Remember," he added, laughing, "the ten thousand dollars reward still stands, and we might earn it."

George chuckled.

"I'm one of the few men who doesn't think himself a better detective than Burns," he returned. "Just the same, I'll do my best to get you a new line on that crime."

"Take all the time you want, but go to the bottom of this business, and don't add anything that does not adhere to the letter of the truth."

The detective set down the address of the Carroll house in a small leather notebook, which he placed in an inside coat pocket. Going down to the street, he hailed a taxi.

After giving the driver the street and house number, he settled down on the cushions and started to plan his campaign for getting new clues. The facts themselves were exciting enough, but they were a year old. If he could only divulge some new angle to the crime, perhaps dig up a clue that every one else had overlooked. He daydreamed until at length he brought himself up short with a laugh. The brightest minds in the criminal department of New York had worked in vain on the problem for months. What could he do with the scent of the trail a year old?

The cab pulled up alongside of a solemn brown-stone mansion in the heart of the better residential district. George paid the driver and told him not to wait.

Before going up the steps he made a careful survey of the house itself and of its surroundings. A costly strip of lawn and rose-garden separated it from its neighbors on one side; on the other, in immediate contact with its own aristocratic stone sides, a gray brick apartment house reared its head a story higher than the Carroll house.

George carefully studied the possible means of forced entry into the premises. From the top of the apartment house it was but a short drop to the roof of the building below. Then an athletic person might lower himself by the drain-pipe, aided by the coping stones, and thence into the upper window.

A large tree on the other side offered better opportunities. One of its main branches brushed the side of the house in close proximity to a small balcony. Once the eight-foot iron fence was surmounted, the rest was easy.

The detective climbed the steps and rang the bell. After what seemed an interminable delay the door opened on a crack and a hatchet-visaged butler peered out.

"Card, sir?" he demanded.

George produced his business card.

"Mr. Carroll is not in," returned the butler.

"Never mind. It's you I want to see, anyway. A year has passed since the murder of Mrs. Carroll and the disappearance of the diamonds. My chief wants a story of the affair, together with an account of the attempts that have been made to apprehend the murderer. If you won't tell me about it I shall have to inquire elsewhee."

The butler warmed to him instantly. Here was a theme upon which he loved to dwell, for discussions involving crime invariably found him holding the center of the stage. Had not he himself almost captured the burglar? And had he not been in the house at the time that Mrs. Carroll was murdered?

Holding open the door, he bowed the detective in. George was instantly struck by the richness and good taste with which the room was furnished. It had an oriental note, soft sensuous tones blending into one another with indescribable charm.

"In the h'art room it 'appened, sir," the butler began, rubbing his palms together in evident delight at his chance to recount the tale.

"It was 'orrible, sir, most 'orrible. 'Earing a awful racket going on downstairs, I slips into my clothes and comes tearing down. There she lays, sir, 'er 'ead all broken where

the villain 'it 'er with a marble statue of Venus. 'E utterly ruined it, too, sir."

"Let's see the art room," suggested George. The butler led the way up a flight of broad, winding stairs to the second floor. The room itself was huge, occupying one whole side of the house. The hall into which it opened was fitted up for a waiting-room and lounge, having a large fireplace in one end, and numerous easy-chairs scattered about.

The detective looked around with interest. It was evident that the owner of the house took keen delight in his collections, for everything was arranged and cared for with scrupulous exactness.

Many of the articles were almost priceless. One wall was covered with armor, weapons of war and trophies of the chase. Scattered here and there on small pedestals were marble statuettes. One little green Buddha particularly caught the young man's attention.

"Murdered for her diamonds, sir," the butler continued. "A most beautiful necklace, a wonderful necklace. My mistress always kept them in the secret safe, except when she went out to a party wearing them. See!" He went over to a large picture hanging on the wall, pressed a concealed button on the frame and disclosed the front of a small steel vault. When he had swung the picture back into place not the slightest trace of anything other than the picture was evident.

"Did she wear them often?" George asked.

"About once in every two or three weeks. Mr. Carroll never goes out much, being busy with 'is art, as it were. Sometimes Mrs. Carroll used to go to dances with gentlemen friends. This night I 'ad retired early. Mr. Carroll told me not to wait up. It was along about two o'clock, maybe a bit later, when I 'eard a woman scream, a terrible, piercing shriek; then a crash, the sound of a falling body, and all was still. I tell you, sir, my 'air fairly rose up on my 'ead."

"Did you hear any footsteps, such as a running man would make, or any other sounds to indicate where he went?"

"None at all. I pulls on my pants and came running down. 'Ere was Mr. Carroll, only partly dressed, feeling 'is wife's 'eart, but it ain't no use. She's as dead as the statue what killed 'er. And the man escaped without a trace. We called the police, but they didn't do a blessed thing. I often think as 'ow if I 'ad done a bit of detecting myself I might 'ave——"

"How did the fellow get in and out again after he had seized the diamonds?"

The butler led him over to the window. The tree which George had observed before he came into the house had thrust out a convenient branch so close to the window that almost any one might have clambered in, hidden from curious eyes on the outside by the dense growth of leaves.

"The window was open. Mr. Carroll was working 'ere before going to bed, and must 'ave neglected to close it. The thief no doubt followed the madam 'ome, 'oping to get a chance at the stones, but being afraid of the men with 'er. Then 'e climbed up the tree, slipped inside, and when she screamed 'e beans 'er with Venus."

The detective thought the explanation over carefully, but could find no flaw in the reasoning. It was perfectly possible for the man to have entered and left again by the method described without attracting attention to himself.

"And that very same night the h'art room was robbed. I saw this man myself. Who knows but what it might 'ave been the same devil as killed madam? 'E 'as a little bag into which 'e stuffs things. When 'e sees me 'e jumps out of the window into the tree and gets away before we can catch 'im, and the police right 'ere in the 'ouse at the time."

"What did he look like?"

"Wore a black mask, sir, over his eyes. 'Ad a most monstrous nose, though, which he seizes and pulls while keeping me covered with a gun. Then 'e grabs up his bag and out he goes."

"They never got any trace of this man, either?"

"Not a single clue, although they 'ave watched the pawnshops and h'art stores for a year. Must 'ave taken the loot to some other city to sell it. Maybe 'e didn't get so much, anyway, on account of me driving 'im out like I did."

George thanked the butler for his assistance and descended the stairs to the lower floor. The butler ushered him out with ceremony.

The day was very warm, causing little puddles of melted asphalt to form in the streets. The detective's collar was wilted and forlorn. He sought the cool shelter of a park bench as a tonic to spur his jaded nerves on to the task of securing a clue from the meagre facts at his disposal.

He thought over the problem carefully. Could the burglar in the art room have been the same one who had done the killing? Surely no one but a maniac would have come back for more loot after having obtained the priceless diamonds. George decided to make the second intruder the center of interest in his theorizing.

A tall man with a big nose, which he pulled when nervous.

"Just like old Hilliard," he laughed. Then he was on his feet in an instant. Impossible! Yet there was a chance, a tiny thread of possibility. George remembered seeing a figure enter a tenement over on the East Side one day when he was watching a fire—a figure that at the time had reminded him of Hilliard. If it was Hilliard, what was he doing here after so many years in the town of Browning? George thought of Hilliard's questionable reputation at home.

The detective was almost run over by a passing cab, so eager was he to hail it. The driver drew up with a clashing of brakes and a skidding of wheels, leaving two black streaks on the sweltering pavement.

On his way across town George almost had a change of heart. It seemed like such a wild goose chase that he was almost tempted to abandon it, but the thought that it was one chance urged him on.

He dismissed the taxi some two blocks from the place where he had caught the fleeting glimpse of the man who might be Hilliard. Crossing the street, he slowly walked towards the tenement, taking up his station at last in a dirty little cigar store almost directly across from it.

Time passed slowly. George consumed nearly a package of cigarettes, all the while scanning with eager eyes any one who entered or left the building across the way. The search seemed futile. Darkness was drawing on; lights began to twinkle in the stores and from the signs. Most of the residents did not go to the extravagance of lights until the night grew inky black.

The young sleuth suddenly straightened up from his slumped position over a counter. Even in the gathering darkness he recognized the slouching, shuffling gait of the man who had just turned in at the tenement entrance.

Heedless of his own safety in the traffic, the detective dashed across the street and into the building. The interior was so dark that he had to listen for footsteps above him to be sure that the man was still ascending the stairs. As quietly as possible George scrambled after him. Missing a step, he came down on his chin with a thud that threatened to put him out of business for a time.

The footfalls stopped. George waited, panting, until they resumed again, and followed. He heard a door slam shut and the click of the key as it turned in the lock. His quarry must be close, for he had arrived at the top floor of the house.

A crack of light appeared at the end of the hall. He hurried down to the room and knocked.

"Who's there?" demanded a startled voice from within. "What do you want?"

"Hilliard?" called back the other. "This is George Brown. Don't you remember me? I saw you on the street, and came up to say hello."

George heard the old man fumbling around the room for a minute before opening the door just wide enough for him to enter. The room smelled musty and stale, in spite of the window being up at the time.

Hilliard extended a clammy hand in greeting. His narrow, piercing eyes seemed to be searching every cranny and crevice of the young man's mind.

"What are you doing in New York?" George asked him.

"Business."

"Have you been here long?"

"A while. What is your own reason for being here?" The old man's hands were constantly pulling at his clothing, making a

crease here and there, then smoothing it out again. All of the time his eyes never left the detective's face. There was something so tigerish about him that George was mighty glad to feel the bulge of the automatic in his coat pocket.

"I work for a paper," he said evasively.

"Oh, a reporter, eh?" snarled Hilliard. "I don't like reporters; always snooping around in some one else's business. Why should a reporter want to see me? If that's what you are, why there is the door. Don't you ever come pesticating around me again, presuming on an old friend to get a story out of him!" The old man was so excited that he fairly shook with the force of his emotion.

"The paper didn't send me here. I came on my own hook. You were always such a good judge of art that I wanted to get your opinion on a little trinket I was thinking of buying."

At the mention of art Hilliard's eyes narrowed to the merest slits. He glanced furtively around the room as if uncertain of his next move. George thought of the murdered Mrs. Carroll and trembled ever so slightly. He was positive from the man's actions that he was on the right track.

Just then a gust of wind whistled in at the open window, overturning a calendar which was standing on the bureau, and with it a green stone Buddha which it had been sheltering.

George made for the statue, dragging out him gun as he jumped. With incredible agility Hilliard sprang to the light switch and plunged the room into darkness. The detective could feel rather than hear the dive that he made for the open window.

Expecting nothing else than to find him a shapeless mass on the street below, George peered out into the fast gathering night. Hilliard evidently had had this method of escape in mind for some time, as it was only a short drop to the roof below, and from there through a labyrinth of chimneys and skylights it would be easy to make a safe descent to the street by means of a fire-escape.

At any rate, the man was gone. The rumble of the city drowned out any sounds which his running feet might have made.

George withdrew from the window and, after falling over a chair and scraping his shins, managed to find the button and snap the light on again. The little green god lay grinning up at him from the floor. The fall had not broken it. The detective instantly recognized the idol as a duplicate of one that he had seen in the Carroll art room that afternoon.

He set it up on the bureau and smiled back at it. The head seemed to be twisted around out of position in regard to the body. He picked it up, and to his intense surprise the head turned easily in his fingers. Evidently it had been made to screw on with consummate skill, for no trace of a line could be seen when it was screwed down into place. By giving it several turns the head came off entirely.

The detective's heart lost two or three beats, then began to race at express train speed, for at the bottom of the hollowed-out body lay the long-sought Carroll necklace in a pool of glittering splendor. The fires of countless ages sparkled up at him just as brightly as if they had not suffered solitary confinement for a year in this snug little prison.

George began to get nervous with the sudden custody of so much wealth. It is one thing to wander about this part of the city alone and without much money; quite another to be in possession of a hundred-thousand-dollar necklace.

Having transferred the ornament to an inside coat pocket, putting his handkerchief on top to keep it from bouncing out, he replaced the Buddha's head and wrapped it securely with an old newspaper which he found in a drawer.

As the detective went down the long hall he expected at any moment to hear the swish of a sandbag, or to have some ruffian jump out at his throat; but his fears were groundless, as he reached the street without attracting any attention.

He sought the head of his detective agency. A new clerk in the office refused to admit him to the busy Chief's presence.

"I must see him," George insisted. "It is a matter of the utmost importance. I am one of his operatives."

The clerk shook his head. "I don't know you," he said.

George took out a card on which he wrote a few words. "Just hand him this card," he said.

A few minutes later the Chief glanced at the card which had been laid on his desk. He swept the papers which lay in a heap before him to one side and rang for the clerk.

"Show the man in," he commanded.

George entered the room and closed the door behind him. Without a word he took the necklace from his pocket and threw the sinuous beauty onto the desk. The Chief examined the stones critically.

"They are the real stuff," he grunted. "What's the story?"

In a few brief, pointed sentences the detective told him of his trip to the Carroll house; how he had caught at the slender thread offered by the butler's description of the second intruder, and how Hilliard had made his escape, leaving behind the little statue with his precious treasure.

"What sort of a man is this Hilliard? Has he nerve?"

"He never used to have much. It would be hard to imagine him doing as desperate a deed as this and then not even leaving the city."

"Perhaps he was waiting to dispose of the stones through a fence after the excitement had died down."

George leaned over and whispered to his Chief for a moment.

"It's worth a chance," agreed the head of the agency.

In a pretty little upstairs shop on the Avenue a man was carefully dusting and arranging sundry articles pertaining to the realms of art. Methodically he went about his task, hanging a picture here, placing a statue there, until the room had given silent evidence of the skillful hands which were working there.

At length a door opened and an elderly gentleman entered. He wore his well-tailored clothes with an air of ease. Confidence asserted itself in every one of his brisk movements as he greeted the shopkeeper and proceeded to examine the contents of the room.

"How are you, Mr. Carroll?" said the shopkeeper. "Like my display?"

"A splendid display—splendid!" he exclaimed. "Mighty glad you called me in to look at it. I am a sort of bug on these things, you know. Every one has to have some sort of hobby to keep his mind off his troubles."

"Here is a queer statue of Buddha," said the other. "It looks like Chinese work to me. What do you think of it?"

He was studying the newcomer's face intently.

"An odd piece—very odd. Where did you pick it up?"

"Found it in a pawn-shop one day."

"What do you ask for it?"

"It's sold. I'm sorry. By the way, will you excuse me for a few minutes? I have to run down the street," he added, looking at his watch. "Make yourself at home. I won't be detained long."

When he had gone the husband of the murdered Mrs. Carroll glanced around the room hurriedly to make sure that he was not being observed. Having satisfied himself in this regard, he unscrewed the head from the Chinese god and slipped a necklace it contained into his pocket. Then he turned to leave.

No suspicions entered his mind that two men had been watching his actions with bated breath through holes scraped in the paint of a transom opening into another room. He was met at the door by a smooth-voiced police officer and a very cool young detective from the Star agency.

"Good afternoon," the detective said. "Suppose we take a walk down to headquarters and show the Chief the trinket that you have in your left-hand coat pocket?"

Carroll's hand went to his hip, but before he could draw a gun George had pinned his arms to his sides.

"Mean-looking piece of armament," the detective observed, after having snapped the bracelets around Carroll's wrists and unburdened him of an automatic. "If he is going to be nasty about it I guess that we had better give him a ride in the wagon."

"I'll call the patrol," said the policeman.

That night the news presses were turning out the damp, ink-covered sheets whose

screaming headlines announced to a scandal loving world that Mr. Carroll had been arrested for the murder of his wife. The city editor closeted himself with George, the young detective, in his cubby-hole of an office, and demanded further details.

"How on earth did you find out who the man was who broke into the house so shortly after the murder?" he inquired.

"I'm not going to claim intuition or any of that rot," answered the detective. "The Goddess of Luck perched on my shoulder, that is all. When the butler told about the burglar having a large nose, which he caressed when excited, my mind instantly pictured old Hilliard, whom I have known since I was a boy back in my home town. Once more Lady Luck smiled at me when she showed me the necklace hidden in the little green Buddha. It was obvious that old Hilliard knew nothing of its existence. All he wanted was the idol. Who did? Probably Carroll was the only person who knew about the secret hiding-place in the idol. We figured that Carroll, in a fit of jealous anger at his wife for her flirtations with other men, had struck her with a statue. When he saw that the woman was dead he hid the necklace in the idol to make it appear that robbery was the motive.

"Exactly," the editor agreed. "And today, when he saw the Buddha, he removed the stones, not so much for their intrinsic value as to prevent the possibility of their being discovered and perhaps traced to him."

"The case of The Little Green Buddha is ended now," said the young detective, rising. "Glad you are giving me publicity for my work. It will help a lot."

And he went back to his office.

ROBBERS ESCAPE IN A TAXI

ALPHONSE VINCI and Joseph Caruso, partners in the National Cast Stone Company, 157th street and River avenue, near the Yankee Stadium, were making up their weekly payroll shortly after noon recently when two men with pistols entered their office shack.

While one of the intruders backed Vinci and Caruso against the wall, the other snatched $1,500 from a desk drawer and wrapped it in a newspaper. Warning the partners to keep quiet, the robbers fled.

Vinci and Caruso saw a taxicab nearby with the engine running. A third armed man stood on the running board with his pistol against the ribs of the driver. As the pair carrying the money jumped in the taxicab disappeared west on 161st street. An unidentified person fired four shots after it. Soon after a police alarm was sent out Eugene Williams of No. 198 West 135th street, came to the West 135th street police station and said he was the driver of the taxicab. He was not arrested.

Williams said that while he was awaiting a fare at 149th street and Gerard avenue, the three men entered his cab and told him to drive near the stone company's office. Here one of them pointed a pistol at him and told him to keep his engine running. The other two walked into the shack.

In 133d street, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, two of the men left the taxicab, while Williams's guard made him drive to 121st street and Mount Morris Park. Here the third man paid $1.50 fare and told him "to beat it north quick."

Satan's Salt

By WILLARD PRICE

IN an upper room of a Baltimore hospital lay a young man with a half million dollars' worth of radium on his knee.

"For the next fourteen hours," he said to Doctor Fanning, who was adjusting the adhesive, "I shall enjoy the delusion of being half a millionaire. Doctor, you are too trustful."

"Too trustful?"

"Absolutely. Six times you have left me in this room all night with no company but this fortune on my knee. Does it never occur to you that we are only one flight up, and the drop from that window to the alley would be nothing at all—even for a man with a sore leg?"

The doctor chuckled grimly. He drew the shades and prepared to leave the room.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Good-night, my friend."

"Why is it nonsense?" persisted the patient.

Doctor Fanning turned, with his hand on the half-opened door.

"My dear man," he answered, with the savage condescension of a busy physician, "radium is the one thing in the world that has seldom been stolen. A thief would find it a white elephant on his hands. Couldn't sell it. It would sell him! Bound to walk into a trap of some kind. It's the devil's own salt," he concluded with another grumpy chuckle, "and the devil takes care of it. There's not a thief in the world smart enough to steal that little package of radium and keep it stolen for one week! Hold your position."

He went out, closing the door abruptly, but noiselessly, behind him.

The patient yawned. Fourteen hours! Fourteen hours with a leg that must be kept in a single position, and would pain from stiffness and burn from the stimulation of the radium, so that sleep would be quite impossible.

He looked about for entertainment to turn his mind from his troubles. From the small table beside his bed he took a writing tablet and a pencil. He drew a double cross, and filled in the apertures with small circles and crosses, playing against himself the game that we used to play on our slates behind teacher's back—you remember. Then he drew rough caricatures of objects in the room. After that he lay half dreaming for a time, eyes closed; then he began scribbling, hastily scratching off page after page. The leg was forgotten.

Three wars had failed to bring any misfortune to John Hood, newspaper correspondent and novelist. Then he had come home from Europe and developed a lump just above his right knee. Four of the greatest surgeons of New York had diagnosed it as sarcoma, and decreed that the leg must be amputated at the hip, otherwise the disease would spread throughout his system and within a year John Hood would have occasion to advise his friends as to his preference between interment and incineration.

The victim was in the act of making final arrangements for the operation which would send him through the rest of his life on one leg, when, with characteristic suddenness, he decided, as a last resort, to try a famous institution in Baltimore.

There Dr. Fanning had said to him:

"Amputation is quite unnecessary. We have cured hundreds of cases of sarcoma with radium."

"But the New York specialists seemed

to believe that radium would only aggravate the growth."

"A little radium, yes. You have hunted lions. You know that a popgun would only aggravate a lion you have to use a rifle to kill him. In that, as in a thousand other cases in life, a little and a lot have diametrically opposite effects. It is so with radium. A little would harry you, but the amount we have here—more than is possessed by any other institution or individual in the country—ought to cure you."

And it was curing him. Once every two weeks he had been coming to Baltimore and spending a night under treatment. Each time the close proximity of five hundred thousand dollars in the compact form of a two by three-inch package of radium had made him uneasy in mind as well as in body.

He was now taking his seventh and last treatment.

"I believe you are cured," the doctor had said. "But we'll give you one last fourteen-hour dose just to clinch the matter."

Two, three, four hours dragged themselves out. John Hood looked up from his writing tablet with which he had been amusing himself. He listened intently; there was not a sound. He smiled at the small bundle astraddle his knee.

"So the doctor thinks nobody is smart enough," he muttered with sarcasm. "Bound to walk into a trap within a week, eh? The grouch! Wouldn't it be the surprise of his life——"

He listened again and scrutinized the window, shook his head and took up his tablet; then he laid it down again.

"Little daughter," he muttered, "we would do a lot with half a million. Little daughter!"

He raised his fingers to his lips and threw an imaginary kiss to his child. Then his eyes went back to his tablet, but his mind did not.

"Nobody smart enough?" he muttered, after a time.

Five minutes passed.

Then the impetuosity which had carried War Correspondent Hood through a thousand wild scrapes, all of them daring, some of them more shrewd than scrupulous, brought him to an erect sitting posture. He swiftly unfastened the cotton-swathed package from his knee and slid out of bed.

The door was closed, the window shades down, the room dark except for the narrow circle of light cast upon the bed by the shaded night-lamp. He dressed silently. Then he dropped the package into his coat pocket, softly opened the window and peered out.

Ten seconds later a certain policeman, if he had not been too sleepy to revolve his head, might have noticed an alert, business-like young man walking briskly in the direction of the station.

But when John Hood came within sight of the station he reconsidered.

"That won't do," he said. "The hospital has my name and address. The first thing detectives will do is to watch the trains for New York. Trap number one! The second thing will be to watch my New York apartment. Trap number two!"

He knew there was little danger from either of these traps, because, if precedent held good, his hospital room would probably not be entered until morning. Yet a little caution would do no harm.

He found a garage and engaged a car for a long run northward. In a telegraph office on the outskirts of Baltimore he wrote and dispatched the following message:

Miss Ruth Hood,
581 St. Nicholas Ave., New York.
Meet me 6 a. m. sure, lobby Greenley Hotel. Bring this telegram. Use taxicab. Careful, dear. Daddy.

"Unearthly hour for a baby to have to roust about the city alone," he regretted. To him she was still a baby, though twelve years old, and a very grown-up young lady in her own estimation.

Fifty miles an hour the machine purred through the cool November night. At five-thirty a. m. John Hood entered the Greenley Hotel, New York City. He faked a name on the register, went up to a room, and removed the wrappings from his precious package.

Hood found a small box, apparently of metal, and within it four violet-stained

glass tubes containing something that looked like dirty table salt.

Was that box lead, tin or platinum? He had a hazy recollection of the doctor mentioning the necessity for a shield of platinum to keep the alpha rays from reaching the flesh, but allow the passage of the beta and gamma rays—or some such scientific riddle. If it were platinum—a metal that could be converted!

"That would solve it," Hood reflected.

During the flight from Baltimore he had thought much. It would be unsafe to try to sell the radium in America. He knew a shady firm in London. But it would take money to get there. He dared not visit the bank to draw his savings, for if the detectives who might trace him were alert they would surely telegraph every bank in New York. He congratulated himself upon being shrewd enough to have thought of this. Another trap avoided.

The matter of ready money worried him, but now selling the platinum made everything appear suddenly very simple.

"I'll show you yet, Doc," he laughed.

He returned to the lobby and bought a morning paper. Nothing yet about his theft.

Then he seated himself where he could look through the street entrance to the curb beyond. He assumed to read the news, but was unable to keep the paper still for an instant. It fluttered and rustled, and dropped every few seconds as he peered over it.

At three minutes to six a small, gray-clad figure, with a lady's poise, but a youngster's color in her rosy cheeks and a sparkle in her big eyes, stepped from a taxi and pressed her weight against the revolving door of the Greenley. The door responded with an astonishing readiness that swept her into a pair of long arms surmounted by a rugged, smiling face with narrow, rather crafty eyes with tears in them.

"Darling."

"Daddy."

"Come up to my room, dear."

In the privacy of his room he gathered her to him.

"Daddy's brave little girl. Staying all alone in that old apartment. And coming, alone, away downtown in the dark."

"That will do," said the child, gently patting his lips. "Daddy, I'm just dying to know. Did you have your treatment? Are you better?"

"The doctor says I am *cured.*"

At which there was ecstatic rejoicing and many kisses, and then she stood beside him where he sat and hugged his head in her arms and kissed his forehead in the protective way she had. Then she sat again on his lap, buried her face in his coat and gave way to sobbing.

"God bless you," he said huskily. "When you are so tender to me I think you are your mother herself come back to life." And when they were both calmer he added: "But I have great news for you."

"Nothing that can compare with your recovery, Daddy."

"Oh, yes. Something much more wonderful. Ruth, dear, I have never been able to give you the chance you deserve. My income has been good when business was good, but it has been so uncertain. Why, your clothes, they are positively shabby. Dear, listen, we are now rich."

The child caught her breath. Her great eyes took on a bewildered radiance.

"Rich, Daddy?"

"From now on nothing will be too good for you—the best teachers, the best travel, the best clothes, the best home—everything. You know Daddy has often lost in Wall Street, but now he has won and won big. We won't even go back to that dingy, old apartment. We will buy everything new. Then we will cross the ocean, and start *living.*"

It was a busy day. Ruth was transported with excitement. They left the hotel at six-thirty, crossed the city and breakfasted. Then Hood looked up "Manufacturing Jewelers" in the classified telephone directory, and jotted down several names. They took a close car—though he had little fear, since he spent so much time in far lands that there were few in New York to recognize him—and Ruth remained in the car while her father visited half a dozen office buildings.

"Ruthie, my little lady," he said, gaily doffing his hat to her, "I guess four thousand dollars ought to last us around the

corner, eh?" Then to the chauffeur: "Ticket office of the Green Star Line. No—let me think."

Another trap. The detectives would certainly watch the outgoing passenger ships. He knew a better plan.

Under the roaring elevated, near the Battery, he entered a small office.

"How about arrangements on a cattleboat for Liverpool," he asked, "leaving today or tomorrow, the little girl to be taken care of in the cabin?"

The agent studied his smudgy, pencilled lists.

"There is a cattle and grain boat called the *Henderson* leaving on Tuesday," he answered.

"But that's four days off. Is there nothing sooner?"

"Nothing."

"Very well. If you will arrange it, we'll go on that boat."

He paid the agent's fee and rejoined his daughter.

"Ruth," he said, "we have four days left in New York. We will make them four glorious days—the most wonderful days we have ever had in our lives. We're going to rent the grandest furnished apartment we can find on Riverside Drive. We're going to visit all the best Fifth Avenue shops where they have lovely dresses, and perhaps we'll look at a necklace or rings at Tiffany's, then we'll have our dinner at the Ambassador and take long auto trips through the country."

"Oh, Daddy," said the girl in subdued tones; "it's like a fairy story. It seems as if it just couldn't be true—couldn't last."

The next few days were delirious. Man and daughter bought and bought, and wore, and ate, and rode, and saw. And, best of all, they were constantly together.

In the luxurious hotel apartment, filled with things more lovely than Ruth had ever seen before, the radium reposed in a small safe in the wall of John Hood's bedroom. His bed was on the far side of the room from the safe.

Since noon of the second day the papers had contained stories of the radium theft. In every story John Hood was named. No trace of the radium had been found. The platinum box had been discovered in the form of ragged strips in the offices of several manufacturing jewelers. Each dealer stated that the strips had been sold to him by a gentleman who stated that he was in the electric pyrometer business, in which the metals platinum and platinum iridium are used in the making of couples, and that, intending now to leave the business, he wished to dispose of his remaining stock of platinum.

John Hood read these reports with many a chuckle. But there were other reports which took away some of the zest of the game. It was stated that, because of the loss of the radium, more than fifty cases were facing almost certain death, and nearly two hundred other patients would have to submit to serious operations unless the precious curative were soon found. A newspaper syndicate assigned a reporter to interview some of the waiting patients. The sob-story he wrote swept the country. John Hood was held up to public detestation, not merely as the thief of half a million, but as a Jekyll who had turned into such a Hyde as to employ his intelligence in the wholesale murder of innocents.

These stories were depressing. But when John Hood saw the ecstatic face of Ruth his spirits would bound upward. Needless to say, he scrupulously kept all papers out of the hands of his little daughter.

During the third day he felt certain twinges above his right knee, also a mild but peculiar sensation in his chest. That night he found the lump above his knee had once more appeared.

This brought up new problems. Most of the night he lay thinking. He heard Ruth tossing and fretting in the next room, and finally went to her.

"What's the matter, little daughter?" he asked tenderly.

"The light shines in my eyes, Daddy. When I close them, it still seems all light, as if there were lamps inside my eyes. And I am so tired and numb—just like when your arm is asleep—only I feel that way all over."

"I am afraid we are trying to do too much these days. We have tired our little girl all out."

He sat beside her, with his hand on her forehead, until she dropped into a fitful sleep. Hood was not anxious about her. A little over-excitement, that was all.

The next morning he left her in bed, instructing her to get a thorough rest, for they were to sail that evening.

Next he went out to a public telephone and asked for Long Distance, Baltimore Hospital, Doctor Fanning.

"Hello, Doctor," he cried, when a familiar grunt had come to him over the wire. "I am a reporter for the New York *Sun*, and we are running a story about the Hood robbery. I wish to be sure of certain facts."

"Can't answer questions by 'phone," snapped the doctor.

"But my questions are very brief and simple. We shall not quote you. We merely wish to check up our statements to be certain that they are correct. I am sure you wish to co-operate with us for the purpose of avoiding inaccuracies."

He accepted a grunt as acquiescence and went on:

"Is it not true that John Hood was cured before he left your institution?"

"Yes," said Doctor Fanning. "And no," he added with equal emphasis. "I believed him cured before the last treatment. But that treatment was only four or five hours long, instead of fourteen hours. If there was any vestige of the disease left brief treatment may have stimulated rather than checked it. The ailment may spread."

"If it were to spread, what part of the body would it attack first?"

"Probably the chest—lungs—then all over."

"In that case would the disease be beyond the cure of radium?"

"Shouldn't care to undertake such a case."

"You mean there would be no hope—no possible cure?"

"None known to science."

"How long would you give him to live?"

"One year."

The questioner gripped the mouthpiece.

"How—how long, doctor?" His voice was uncertain.

"I thought so," said the doctor in a sharp grunt. "You are no reporter. You are John Hood."

The thief placed the receiver on the stand, opened the booth door and looked out. He could see his machine waiting. He reentered the booth, closed it and took up the receiver. Then he smiled—with effort.

"Of course, doctor," he said genially. "So good of you not to forget my voice. But don't mention my name again, or I may be forced to ring off."

"Now look here," crunched the doctor. "If I were there I'd have you in jail in ten minutes. But I can't jail you by long distance. Listen to me closely. You are sick, or you would not have called me up. What I have told you is the truth. A year is your limit. In that case the radium is useless to you. I detest making a fair proposition to a cur, but if you will have the radium returned to this hospital I will see that you go free."

"I presume you think you have made a very generous offer," replied Hood. "But suppose I decline to accept it?"

"Why should a drowning man hug gold?" retorted the doctor. "But I will go further. Although no cure is possible, much can be done to relieve your pain during the year. Without that relief, you will suffer intensely. I will engage to take you in. I will see that you are cared for as if you were a man, instead of a snake. You will receive, free of charge, the best hospital accommodations and treatment——"

"Doctor"—and Hood's voice rang steady now—"your little nugget of news concerning my malady has not depressed me in the least, nor has it changed my plans, nor has it made me sorry for an instant that I was smart enough to relieve you of your self-content and your half-million dollars' worth of salt. You say the radium is useless to me. You are quite wrong. I have plans, doctor, very pretty plans. Good-morning."

"You—you——" the doctor choked. "I'll come up and get you myself."

John Hood went out whistling. Before entering his car he strolled down the street a few yards to look in at a haberdasher's. Stopping before the window he braced his legs jauntily apart, cocked his head a trifle, and examined some headgear.

"I really need a sportier hat," he smiled.

Suddenly, in the mirror backing the win-

dow, he caught sight of his own face. It was blanched.

"Oh, pah!" he exclaimed and returned to his car.

A year. Yes, that was plenty of time. That would be time enough to get Ruth settled pleasantly in England, find a good guardian for her, place her fortune in safe custody, so that she would always have enough and to spare of everything, arrange for her schooling, and make all other provisions for her future. Yes, within a year, everything could be well taken care of. And what a glorious year it would be—how happy he could make her.

He burst into her bedroom with such a gust of merriment and enthusiasm that she laughed at the very sight of him.

"And how is my little girl now?"

"Oh, fine, Daddy, now that you are here. But it's so funny—I can hardly move."

They did not sail that night. Her voice became fainter, and when morning came she was unable to make any but the slightest movements. Her father dreaded to call a physician into the house, but a greater dread compelled him to do so.

The doctor, a stranger, was very grave.

"This is beyond me," he said. "I should want a specialist to see this case. To me she would appear to be in the same condition I have seen induced in a mouse or a rabbit by laboratory experiments with some powerful radioactive substance. But of course that is an impossible diagnosis. It is at least plain that your daughter's case is extremely serious."

"How serious?"

"I could hardly answer that. With your permission, I shall call a specialist at once."

He returned from the phone rubbing his hands.

"Now we shall soon know," he said with an effort at cheerfulness. "Doctor Morton of St. Luke's will be here immediately. He is bringing with him a friend from Baltimore, Doctor Fanning, the famous radium specialist. Just happened to be in town."

The man beside the stiff, girlish figure raised his head dully. Then he let it sag again. His resources! His shrewdness! Surely they were needed now. Where were they?

He sat stupidly until the physician admitted the specialists.

"Good-morning, Hood," smiled Doctor Fanning. Then, ignoring the stooped man, he gave his attention to the half-conscious child.

After a few moments he said abruptly:

"Paralysis. Produced by over-exposure to radium. In some way this man has killed his daughter."

The thief flinched as under a blow, but did not raise his head.

"Can't live out the day," went on Doctor Fanning. "That stuff must be very near by. Ah! Close your eyes, doctor. You feel the fluorescence in the eyeballs? Right around here somewhere!"

He went searching about, in and under the bed, in the dressing table, then pushed out the bed slightly and went behind it, tapping along the wall with his fingers.

At one spot the wall paper suddenly fell away in brittle flakes.

"We have it!" he exclaimed. "That's its chemical action on paper, Doctor," he said to the general practitioner. "Is that a real diamond on your finger, or a phony?"

"Real," said the physician meekly.

"Bring it here."

The physician obeyed. The stone, when held near the wall, gave out a ghostly radiance.

"Now you might call a police officer," said Doctor Fanning.

He proceeded to dig the wall with his pen-knife for a few moments.

"No opening here," he growled. "Must be on the other side."

He visited the next room, and returned to John Hood.

"The key," he snapped.

It was dumbly delivered to him.

There was the click of the key in the safe-lock, a grunt of delight from the radium specialist, then a bang of the hall door, and the entrance of an officer.

Ruth's eyes fluttered, opened, closed, opened. John Hood sprang into life.

"My baby!" he shrieked madly, bending over her. "My little baby!"

She tried to speak, but could not; but she smiled, oh so wan and cramped a little smile—one could just barely know that

it was intended to be a smile. Then her eyes closed again.

"This man," Doctor Fanning was explaining to the officer, "is the radium thief. Having stolen the radium, he was so stupid as to place it in the safe directly opposite his daughter's bed where she has been exposed to it night after night. The result is her death. Take him in custody before he makes a bigger fool of himself."

"You are under arrest," said the officer, placing a heavy hand on the thief's shoulder.

John Hood laughed dryly.

"Under arrest?" he repeated in a sort of stupor. "Go ahead and arrest me—I'm afraid that's a joke on you, gentlemen. Ha, ha—why—can't you see—there's nothing to arrest—nothing. If you can find anything left of me to arrest—why, go ahead—gentlemen—go ahead——"

There was a crash as Hood fell out of bed, and the dream vanished like magic.

"God!" he exclaimed, gripping the tangled bed covers. I'm glad it isn't true!"

There was a cold sweat on his forehead as he climbed into the cot and rearranged the radium on his knee.

A nurse came in.

"Anything the matter?" she asked anxiously.

"No," he smiled. "Just dreaming.

NOTORIOUS COUNTERFEITERS

PHILIP LIEBERMAN, said by Secret Service men to be one of the most accomplished counterfeiters alive, is under arrest and was arraigned before Federal Judge Edwin L. Garvin in the United States District Court on an indictment which charged him with manufacturing a flood of spurious $20 notes circulated throughout Brooklyn in 1921.

Lieberman is internationally known as a counterfeiter and is credited with the Bank of England "job" in 1900, when his notes were so perfect that many of them defied detection. He was arrested in the home of Paul Adler, 330 New York avenue, Jamaica, by Secret Service Agents Joseph E. Walker and James M. Weitsman, who have been looking for him for more than two years.

When, with the aid of other agents, they raided the Adler home Lieberman dropped from a second-story window to a shed where he was subdued after a fight. The agents declared that they found two stills in Adler's home, besides a printing press.

Lieberman is said to be one of the most expert steel and photo engravers alive. He is credited with making the plates which counterfeited notes of the Bank of England. The British Isles and Continental Europe were flooded with these notes in 1909, and they came near to wrecking many banks abroad. He served a long term in prison on evidence gathered by the Scotland Yard men, after which he migrated to the United States.

He has produced counterfeit notes in the United States, it is said, which defy detection. He has served terms in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary and in the Connecticut State Prison at Weathersfield, near Hartford. He was indicted in Brooklyn in 1921 jointly with Max and Aaron Silver after, it is said, the trio, aided by Mrs. Gussie Silver, wife of Max, had distributed 1,000 of the spurious $20 bills.

Aaron Silver is said to have originated the plot while in prison.

Secret Service agents who examined the bills which Mrs. Silver had passed declared that but for a slightly darker shade of ink used in the border and for an almost imperceptible defect in the lapel of the coat of Grover Cleveland, with whose portrait it was embellished, it was a perfect imitation. A great deal of merchandise found in her home at 666 New Jersey avenue, Brooklyn, was bought with the spurious currency.

Red Murray--Kidnaper

By J. B. WARRENTON

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

IT seemed to Red Murray as if pandemonium had broke loose in the Stebbins house. Lights glowed brightly from the rooms above; doors slammed, and furniture was moved with strident sounds, then sent crashing to the floor. Hurrying feet were everywhere in the quest for the child Red Murray had stolen, and then a voice boomed out above the turmoil:

"Watch out there, you pack of blunderers. There's a jasper just ducked into the front room. Watch your step, now; there may be a flock of them. They're not bulls or they'd show their hand. They're a bunch of private dicks, that's—— Get that?"

Red turned back for a moment and ascended a few steps that he might see what was happening above. An instant later he saw Coffee dash madly from the darkness of one of the front rooms, with hope, no doubt, of reaching the chamber that opened upon the piazza roof and make a getaway. The searchers spied him as he made the rush and were upon him in the next instant and bore him to the floor.

Red waited but a moment to see his captors arise from Coffee's prostrate figure. He was lying in a huddled mass, quite still.

Then the thought of his own peril aroused Red. He must seek a way of escape for himself. Still keeping his hand over the baby's mouth, Red hurried across the hall and found his way into the kitchen. Here he paused long enough to breathe and to consider his next move. The child he was holding was now quiet and overtly contented. As Red looked down on the smiling dimpled face a new problem confronted him. What would he do with the child? If he were to come forward and try to explain matters, now that they had captured Coffee, would they compromise and let him go, or would they wreak their vengeance on his erstwhile pal and then turn them both over to the police?

"Not a chance for me," he concluded after careful deliberation. And again, Red Murray never peached on a pal yet—even though Coffee was a low-down crook. He was helpless now. Let the police do the rest. He must make his own getaway, and as to the disposition of his burden he would settle that later.

The movements of the searchers were still at its height, and the one with the bellowing voice, who seemed to be the head of the servants, was shouting orders like a Yankee skipper when the glass is falling. Hither and thither they rushed without plan, and seemingly sure that the offender was still hiding in the upper rooms.

Red concluded to leave the child lying on the kitchen table, where they would find it before the search was ended. The room was cold—unusually so for a house that was being prepared to welcome its owners in a few days. The baby was sleeping, and Red stripped off his threadbare coat, wrapped the child up warm and snug and laid it gently on the table, drawing two high-back chairs to its edge, thus building an improvised obstruction to prevent it falling onto the floor should it awaken or roll in its sleep. But the baby stirred and awoke contrary to Red's project, heralding a protest at its abandonment by a shrill cry.

Red muttered a curse and sprang for the door opening onto the back porch. As his hand turned the knob he stiffened as he heard a voice in the hall saying:

"If that guy gets away with the kid it's a fade-out for us. Confound Della. If she hadn't mopped up a bottle of shine, and fell asleep, she'd a-seen those birds when they came. Let's look around on this floor."

"My God," thought Red. "What do they mean? Who are they, and whose baby is it? Mopping up shine, and fade-outs." Then his thoughts flashed back to the parlance he heard on the stairs before they caught Coffee. "Not regular bulls. Private dicks—God. What if they were crooks."

With a bound Red was beside the table. Taking the baby in his arms, he glided to the door, swung it open, and stepped out into the night. When he reached the open air he found himself breasting a strong east wind that chilled him to the bone. But the child must be kept warm at all cost, so he snuggled his coat closer around it. Though he well knew the danger he ran in so doing, he determined to carry the child with him in his flight. Intuition seemed to warn Red that, although he had saved the baby from the murderous fingers of Coffee, it was threatened with another danger.

Casting a hurried glance about, and seeing no one, he made a headlong dash for the road. As he ran the grotesque shadows of the trees that flanked the driveway seemed like long, sinewy fingers stretched forth to seize him, and he shuddered.

It was rather a rough experience for the child, but one it evidently enjoyed, for he cooed and laughed joyously. The turbulence at the house had somewhat abated, and the sound of voices were growing fainter, but there came to Red with startling distinctness from the direction of the garage the purr of a motor. There was a grinding meshing of gears, followed by the roar of the exhaust, and an automobile shot from the obscured interior and rolled to a stop before the house.

Red waited to see no more. He knew that the police, who would soon be attracted by the noise and the flittering of lights in the house, would not take long to get at the cause of the commotion. He winced when he thought of the stretch he would get in Charlestown—maybe life. So he hurried away, keeping as close to the buildings along the street as he possibly could.

The eastern sky was clearing with its tarnished-gray of the new-born day as Red neared his home. Signs of life were visible, a few stragglers wending their way to some early morning toil. He was only a short distance from his house now, but he must get under its friendly shelter at once. It would be a matter of minutes—seconds, maybe—before a bluecoat would loom up on the horizon, and then it would spell "finish" for one Red Murray.

Besides that, he was growing giddy from hunger and fatigue, and his strength was fast slipping away. But he gritted his teeth and carefully stole along through the well-known alleys and byways. As he emerged from the mouth of the narrow passage that fronted his home he mustered all his strength, dashed across the intervening space and staggered gaspingly into the house.

Norma, his wife, pale with apprehension and gaunt from a long vigil, sat huddled in a chair when he entered. As Red stood before her she arose to her feet and uttered a startled cry. She quickly recovered herself, and the husband and wife stood staring at each other for a fleeting moment.

"My God, Red!" she gasped when she found her voice. She was clutching the back of the chair for support, and her tone was hoarse with fear. "Where have you been, and what have you done? Tell me, Red. Tell me that you haven't been stealing children. Oh, God," she moaned, her eyes now glued on the baby in his arms. "Has it come to that? Have you gone mad, Red? Have you? Whose—where did you get that child?"

Her last question died with a moan in her throat.

"Listen, Norma. Listen, honey, till I explain," pleaded Red beseechingly. "Don't raise de whole neighborhood. I couldn't see de poor kid——"

Norma, recovering from her first shock, stamped her foot as the blood slowly suffused her face.

"Tell me, Red, where did you get that child? If you've gone and stole it, tell me. Oh, Red, why did you do it?"

CHAPTER FIVE

RELUCTANTLY, but truthfully, Red told the whole story from his meeting with Coffee; the break, the crook's threat to kill the child and the strange conduct and unparental language of the occupants of the house.

"An', Norma, honey," he finished, as he sat limply in a chair squirming under his wife's reproachful look, "de way dem birds talked they hadn't ought t' own a kid."

She looked again at the baby, which was sleeping peacefully in her arms. Through *her* hazy recollection there also seeped a faint mental instinct that she had seen that dimpled face before. Somewhere, some time, but where she could not remember.

"Go and have a nap, Red; I must think," Norma said. "You're an old dear for doing what you thought was right. But you know, and well I know, that the police won't swallow that story. Not from Red Murray, anyway."

"You said it, Norma; you said it," allowed Red. "I'll take de kid back an'——"

"Get pinched," she interrupted impatiently, waving him down as he attempted to arise. "That's just what you won't do. Go stretch out on the bed and let me dope a way out."

Norma, who had been over hard bumps and rough places of her small place on earth, had not been hardened as might be expected from one of her kind. Ever since she married Red she could only see one way to live—the honest way. Then her thoughts turned to bringing her husband around to her way of thinking, and she had seemingly succeeded when the present menace threatened. Many times in the past she had matched her wit against the police, and she could do it again if the occasion required.

Red, who had been dozing, was now fast asleep. Norma carried the child to her bedroom and carefully laid it on the bed. When she returned to the kitchen Red was sleeping soundly. A feeling of pity took possession of her and her eyes were misty as she noted his drawn, pinched face.

"Poor Red," she murmured sadly, then returned to her room and lay down.

How long she slept she could not tell. She was awakened by a loud knocking on the outside door, and as she sprang from the bed she noted that the sun had nearly reached the zenith. The baby was awake, cooing softly and watching with eager interest a dancing sunbeam that had percolated through a torn rent in the window-shade. Fully awake now, panic seized her as she staggered from the room. The knocking had aroused Red, who was sitting erect and rubbing his eyes. Norma reached his side and laid her hand lightly on his shoulder, and as he looked up into her face she placed a finger over his mouth for silence, at the same time inclining her head toward the bedroom.

"Get in there," she hissed.

Red looked up at her stupidly and opened his mouth to protest. But the metallic glitter in her eyes bade him obey.

Brushing back her disheveled hair, Norma then squared her thin shoulders and walked unsteadily to the door as another loud knock shook the frail door and threw it open.

For an instant her heart stopped beating and the blood froze in her veins. But the ex-cracksman's wife was no weakling in an emergency and quickly rallied her courage.

"Good morning, Mr. Bradley," she smiled a greeting to the Headquarters sergeant. "A little late, I'll admit, but to Red and I at these times all hours are alike. Won't you come in?"

Detective-Sergeant Bradley stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. Norma waved him to a chair, but he paid no notice to her gesture.

"Where's Red?" he asked abruptly, fixing his keen gaze on Norma's face. "What time did he get home this morning? Did he bring the baby?"

"Oh, my God, it's all over," she moaned, tottering back and would have fallen had not the Headquarters man seized her, lowering her gently into a chair.

Her cry brought Red from the bedroom, his huge shoulders hunched, his eyes blazing.

"Lay off her, Bradley!" he exclaimed. "I've never bucked you guys yet, but by Heaven you nor any other bull is gonna put

no rough stuff over on dis little woman. Get me, Bradley. When I tried t' go straight, what did they do t' me? Got me canned 'cause I'd been in stir. I took de kid, and didn't kidnap it, either. Norma didn't know anything about it—see. De kid's here safe, an' I'll go wid ya. But listen here, Bradley; you was always a square-shooter, an' I tink youse gonna be one now. But if you do frame Norma on dis case I'll get you if I have t' tear de jail apart t' do it."

Norma had arisen and was holding fast to Red's arm. Tears coursed down her palid cheeks as she clung to her husband and strove to subside his passion. Detective Bradley looked on, a faint tinkle in his eyes, and his lips parting slowly.

"You've said your whole mouthful, Red; now sit down," the detective ordered quietly, but firmly. "I know you didn't steal the baby. You took it from the real child stealers. I've been hot on a clue which I picked up the other day, and got to the Stebbins house just as the gang was making their getaway in a high-powered automobile. A fellow named Williams, an unfaithful butler, was tool for the master-mind of the gang, Jim Reycroft."

"Oh," breathed Red, sinking into a chair.

"That man was the means of furnishing them with a favorable rendezvous, the Stebbins family being in Europe. It also averted any suspicion that the police might harbor. To make it look more bonafide, the butler was seen daily going to and fro, and several packages were delivered from a small autotruck, thus seemingly verifying the statements he'd been making that the folks were expected home soon, and they were getting the house ready and the silver service, etc., were coming from the safe-deposit vaults. Very clever so far, until one of the uniformed police thought he recognized in one of the 'servants' a crook named Lally that he sent up a few years ago. He wised me up to the fact, and I looked up his record, to find that his specialty was blackmail and kidnaping."

"Yes," muttered Red dazedly. "Go on."

"Then, mind you, while I was snooping around the Stebbins house who did I set my glims on but a crook from the West. He saw me first and faded out. I questioned Williams and made a tour of the house. Everything looked O. K. as far as I could see, and the butler denied all knowledge of any person that answered the description of Lally. Then through the Stebbinses banker I located them in France. I cabled, and the reply was that Stebbins was wholly ignorant of any such preparations; that Williams had been discharged and had given little thought to an early return."

Red nodded, and the detective went on:

"Last night I made the raid. I had plenty of help, and we bagged the whole works. In searching the house we stumbled across a 'bird' tied up and shut in a closet. It was the crook that I saw on the streets a few days before—Dandy Mack from Detroit, a porch-climber, false-key worker, all-around crook and a fugitive from justice."

"He sure was some mad guy when we untied him, damning a pal that he claimed was in with him on the break and left him cold when the gang jumped him. He told me about the kid, and was more than ready to give me a description of a broad-shouldered bulk of humanity, down and out, and singled from a gang of Public Garden bench-warmers. But that didn't tell me much until he mentioned that 'the quitter had the reddest mop of hair he ever saw sticking out from under a battered derby hat.' Then my thoughts turned to you."

Norma, who had been drinking in every word uttered by the Headquarters' man, murmured fervently:

"Thank God, it was you who trailed Red."

Murray grunted as he watched the detective.

"I wasn't quite sure it was you," went on Detective Bradley, "as I know how you've worked in the past, and baby-stealing was not in your line. Then I wondered whose child it was, and why the would-be thief stole it, and if he was one of the gang.

"At Headquarters I put Reycroft on the grill, and he came clean and told me whose child it was and where the others were hidden. We made a clean-up there, and then I turned my attention to finding the kid that the red-headed prowler ran off with.

"First I laid my suspicion before the

father of the child, who is a man of influence in this city. He agreed to help the one that acted so humanly. Dandy Mack told me how he'd wished he'd attended to choking the child instead of leaving it to a chicken-hearted quitter. Now bring out the baby, Norma; his father and nurse are waiting in his car out in front."

"Then you ain't gonna arrest Red, Mr. Bradley?" cried the crook's faithful wife.

Detective Bradley shook his head.

"No, Norma, I'm going to do nothing of the sort. I told Red if he went straight that I'd help him. He's got the big chance now, as there is a matter of a little reward connected with this particular case. I have here a check for two thousand dollars, made out to one Edward C. Murray. That is the reward offered for the recovery of the child. I would advise you and Red to go West—big, wholesome, fair-minded West. There's a chance for every man there—but he must be a *man*. Your past is never questioned when you enter that man's territory, but swift justice awaits the one who breaks their laws."

With a smile he drew from his pocket a sealed envelope and placed it in Norma Murray's trembling hand.

She tried to speak, but the strain had been too much for her. With a low moan she pitched forward and collapsed in the detective's arms. But she quickly recovered and staggered to where her husband was staring with mouth agape. Throwing her arms about his neck, she sobbed with joy.

"By der way, Mr. Bradley," asked Red, when he at last managed to speak, "whose kid is it?"

"Who is this bunch of good nature?" smiled the detective, looking down tenderly on the baby. "Why, his picture has adorned the front page of every newspaper in New England for the past forty-eight hours. He's *only* the son and heir of Governor Follet."

(The end)

READ THE NEW SERIAL COMMENCING IN THE NEXT NUMBER

THE TITLE IS

"COLD PEARLS"

By ROBERT RUSSELL

CHASE AFTER A FORGER

A WELL-DRESSED young man who had attempted to have a forged check for $100 cashed at the Commercial Trust Company, Broadway and Forty-first street, led a chase that thrilled many through traffic crowded Broadway recently. The check was drawn on the account of a depositor, but the teller detected the forgery and notified John G. Hemerich, the secretary. John Williams, a negro special officer, asked the young man to step into the office of Mr. Hemerich. He walked along with them until he got near the door, and then darted out and started running across Broadway like a deer.

The street was crowded with automobiles from curb to curb, and the forger darted from in front of one only to get in the path of another, with Williams blowing a police whistle, close on his heels. On the other side of the street a traffic policeman joined the negro in the chase, and the young man started running north on Broadway in front of a taxicab. He managed to keep the taxicab and one or two other motor vehicles between him and his pursuers until he reached Forty-second street, where he ran through the Broadway entrance of a drug-store in the Knickerbocker Building.

Williams and the policeman thought the man would run through the store and emerge on the Forty-second street side of the building, so they went there instead of pursuing him. They waited for a few minutes, and then learned that the fugitive had made a getaway by leaving the store through the same door he had entered, going into the subway.

Swindlers' Tricks

By POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

THERE is no type of crook more to be feared than the swindler who works on the credulity of a trusting victim. These pariahs all develop a thoroughly honest and convincing manner that inspires confidence. Without the power to gain a man's confidence they could not carry on their nefarious work one day.

They have an honest air—a glib and plausible manner, and the ability to talk a man into perfect belief in what they say.

As a great many honest people are ignorant of the methods employed by these rascals, an exposure of the way they work may put our decent citizens on their guard against being victimized.

One of the commonest forms of swindling was worked in the following manner: One of a gang of crooks loitered about a railroad depot in the city. He was usually a well-dressed, smooth talker with an innocent face and a convincing way. Having spotted a man coming to the city from a rural district, he approached him with a bland smile, clapped him on the shoulder familiarly, and exclaimed:

"Well! Well! Well! If it isn't my old friend John Rider from Fairlawn."

The ruralite would naturally say:

"Guess you've made a mistake, mister. My name isn't Rider."

"It isn't!" cried the crook, looking astonished. "Well, I beg your pardon sir. You look enough like my friend Rider to be his twin. And you don't live in Fairlawn, New Jersey?"

"No, I'm Charles Kidder, owner of the general store in Barberry, Pa."

The swindler would make profuse apologies and hurry away and meet his pal, to whom he would explain what happened. This done, he hastened to their rendezvous to prepare a trap for the ruralite.

The crook whom he spoke to now made his way toward their victim, and, acting startled and pleased, he gripped his hand.

"Great Scott! Charles Kidder!" he cried. "When did you get in from Barberry? How's the little old general store doing out there in Pennsylvania? Gee, but it's a treat to see you again after all these years."

Addressed by his own name, mention of his store and his place of residence usually made the victim believe the stranger knew him.

"You've got the best of me," he might say. "You seem to know me, but I'm hanged if I remember you."

A small pocket reference book had shown the crook that Barberry had 1,700 inhabitants, gave the names of the leading citizens and other data which the crook rapidly memorized. He then explains that he is the scapegrace son of Henry Dink, president of the Barberry bank, who ran away from home and came to the city to make his fortune. Having aroused Kidder's interest, as he naturally knew the president of his home bank, he proceeds to tell Kidder of a get-rich-quick scheme in which he wants to invest, but hasn't got the money. Adroitly playing on the other's cupidity, the crook gets him to go to a certain house to see the scheme worked. At the house his pal has arranged a fake wire-tapping device to beat the horse races, or some similar game, and before the ruralite realizes it he is shorn of every dollar he carries and the swindlers vanish.

Among the more recent tricks of swindlers was the land and home investment game that buncoed hundreds of people out of their hard-earned money. The housing stringency caused the trouble. A number of land sharks would club their capital, but

a cheap worthless tract of ground in the country, and advertise home sites for sale at low prices, to be paid on the installment plan. When a victim appeared at their city office he was taken to a very fine piece of property, given his choice of lots, not a great distance from the company's cheap property, and when the deed was made out it was for a parcel of the worthless lots. The victims did not know they had deeds for cheaper ground and kept multiplying, and went on paying their installments until the fraud was finally discovered when the victim tried to build on somebody else's property. Then the swindlers decamped. As most real estate dealers are honest and reliable men the crooks had little trouble to fool their victims, for the sharpers figured that the reliability of real estate dealers would protect them long enough to make a clean-up and a swift getaway.

The three-card monte men and the shell-game artists are another class of crooks who fleece the public attending circuses and similar shows. The adroit manipulators of the shell and pea have such nimble fingers that they convince their victims it is easy to beat their game. The operator is usually supplied with a small collapsible table on which stand three half-shells of English walnuts, and a dark brown pellet as big as a green pea. The ball is usually made of wax, as it must be adhesive for the proper working of the trick. The crook offers to bet five or ten dollars that none of his audience can show him which shell covers the pea. If a man volunteers, the crook shows the pea, and begins to clumsily shuffle the shells about, placing the pea first under one shell and then another. The victim sees the shell he last placed over the pea, and as he stands close to the table his glance follows the right shell until the crook lifts his hands and tells his victim to locate the pea. Every one has seen the crook place the pea under the shell the victim lifts up. And yet the elusive pea is not there. The spectators are naturally mystified. They saw the crook place the pea under that particular shell, and never lost sight of the shell for a moment. Where had the pea gone? Being adhesive it stuck to the back of the crook's finger, and was not seen as it came out from under the shell as he held his palm toward the victim. It was an easy matter to deposit the pea under one of the other shells without being detected. No matter how keen of vision you may be, the trick is done so skillfully that it is not possible to detect it, for the pea when removed from under the shell is shielded from your gaze by the crook's fingers. No man in the world was even known to win, unless the crook deliberately let him do it. And the reason he permits you to win occasionally is because he wants to lure you on so you will lose more than a single bet. There was a time, years ago, when these shell-game swindlers openly plied their business in New York City, but the police finally drove them out.

New swindling tricks are cropping up all the time. Here is a game about which wives and mothers should know: The swindler locates a business man's private residence. It is an easy matter to find out all about the ordinary habits of the family, and equally as easy to learn the names of his clerks, etc. The crook then typewrites an order for three suits of clothes, a mass of jewelry, or anything else of value, and typewrites the signature of the business man, as he cannot forge the man's pen signature. The order is addressed to the man's wife or mother, and instructs her to give bearer her sealskin coat, or his clothing, to be repaired or renovated. The crook goes to the man's residence, cuts the telephone wire, presents his order, and usually gets what he's after. If the lady tries to verify the fake note by phone, she finds the phone out of order. Should she go to use a neighbor's phone, the crook disappears. If she doesn't, he glibly talks to her about her husband's buiness and names some of his clerks, and her suspicions are disarmed. She gives what he calls for, and does not learn that she has been swindled until her husband arrives home that night. With several hours' start, the slick swindler gets away, abandons the disguise he has worn to conceal his identity, and a false description of the culprit is innocently given to the police or the insurance company, and in many cases the crook is not captured.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack.' by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
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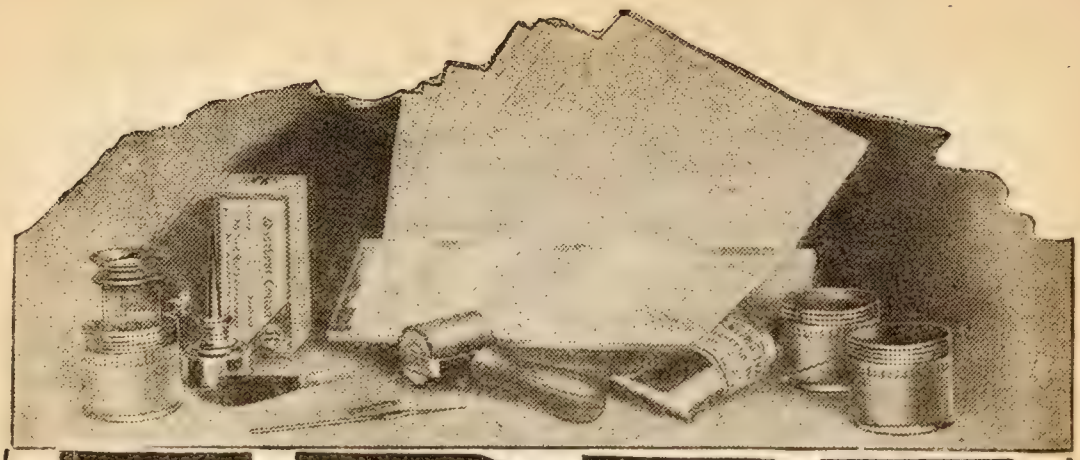

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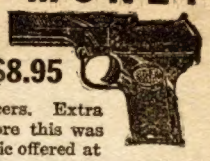

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